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## news

## significant shorts

## Paris talks over Guernsey fishing rights

Talks are to take place in Paris tomorrow to resolve the fishing rights dispute between Guernsey and France. Representatives from Guernsey, Britain and France will try to solve the dispute, which came to a head on Monday, when 10 French trawlers invaded the Sark Box, a lucrative fishing area south of Guernsey in defiance of a ban imposed by the island's authorities. A Home Office spokesman said last night that a Royal Navy fishery protection vessel had taken up station in Sea Isle waters. *Philip James*

## Extradition for Mafia daughter

The daughter of a convicted Mafia leader yesterday lost her High Court battle against extradition to Italy where she is wanted on drug-trafficking charges. Maria Merino, 26, will have to return to Italy within two months. If found guilty, she could face 15 years in prison. *Charlie Bain*

## Coma mother dies in hospital

A woman who gave birth in a coma following a car crash has died in hospital. Karen Battenbough, 25, died at Clydach Hospital in Swansea, having spent 22 months unconscious. Her kidneys failed after pneumonia set in.

## £30,000 fine for human fireball accident

A Derby smelting company, Bernhard Metals (UK), was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £20,000 costs yesterday after a furnaceman died in an horrific accident. Labourer Anthony Jackson, 32, became a human fireball after molten metal set his clothes alight. He died in hospital 12 days later. Mr Justice Hadden said at Nottingham Crown Court: "The lack of thought by this company towards its employees beggars belief."

## Peace process explanation

The Northern Ireland minister, Michael Antram, arrived in Brussels yesterday to explain Government conditions for Sinn Féin's admission to peace talks. Mr Antram said he wanted to "iron out misconceptions" in Europe about these demands or about the peace process in general. *Katherine Butler*

## Chauffeurs to strike over pay

Whitehall chauffeurs have voted by a margin of 85 per cent for an indefinite strike over pay. The 140 drivers have been offered a 2 per cent rise, giving them £248 for a 49-hour week, but they want an extra 1.4 per cent in common with managerial and administrative staff.

## Labour's bad gang seeks safer targets



The large audience made the ministerial fog bank even more painfully dense than ever

Taylor 1, Taylor 2, Page and Knight as "grey" is to deprive that hue of colours, textures, shades, nuances and moods which often go overlooked. A bar full of retired assistant bank managers discussing with-profit annuities at a joint golf club and Rotarians fund-raiser, holds out more prospect of hilarious fun. So the naughty boys' bench (where Dennis Skinner always sits) had eight, rather than the usual two occupants. The heckler's area (at the back, beyond the gangway) was also well populated, with George Foulkes and Tony Banks engaging in a personal competition to see who could get the best one-liners and abusive names inserted at delicate points in Tory MPs' questions or ministers' replies. The effect on the minister-

ial fog bank of this unexpected large and unappreciative audience was to make it even more painfully obscure, dense and rapid than ever. Labour's Kevin Hughes (Doncaster North) mischievously asked Richard Page, Under Secretary for Small Business, Industry and Energy about deregulation (incidentally this is a bad title, since the "small" appears to apply as much to the energy and industry as it does to the business, suggesting that the minister is both lazy and ineffective). "How many items of legislation have been repealed since the beginning of the deregulation initiative in 1994; and how many statutory instruments [that is, new regulations] have been introduced in that period?" was Mr Hughes's question. There had, mumbled Mr Page, been 93 repeals and 315

new instruments. Not a great success, then! roared the naughty boys. Mr Page made the best of a bad job. Mr Hughes "did not quite grasp the principle of deregulation", he floundered, explaining that "we live in an increasingly complex world". Most of these regulations were measures for consumer protection. Did the Opposition not "want to remove carcinogens from babies' dummies?" he asked, desperately updating one of politics' oldest accusations. Few were enjoying this more than Tony Banks. No Conservative was safe from an interjection from the member for Newham North West and (if polls are to be believed) destined to become the first elected Mayor of London. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon) was opposed to the 48-hour di-

rective; "vicious mill-owner!" shouted Tony. The Oflet regulator was opposed to Labour's windfall tax, said another Conservative. "Tory stooge!" came the cry. But who did he remind me of? Then I twigged. Tony Banks is metamorphosing into Captain Haddock, the permanently (and comically) enraged sidekick of Tintin the boy detective, whose stock-in-trade was a collection of colourful terms of abuse such as "Coelacanth!", "bashi-bazouks!", "vegetarians!" and, of course, "billions of blue blistering barnacles!" The blue barnacles affixed to the government benches may not appreciate the new Haddock, but Tintin, the boy leader, certainly will. So as long as loyal Banksy keeps his shoes on, he will prosper, even under the new disciplinary code.



Skeleton staff: Solomon Carty cleaning the replica diplodocus at the Natural History Museum in London. The dinosaurs lived 150 million years ago. Photograph: Adrian Dennis

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## Gummer pledge on genetic maize

Ian Burrell

Labour has called on Ian Gummer, the president of the Board of Trade, to take "immediate steps" to stop genetically-altered American corn being allowed to enter the British food chain. The Independent revealed yesterday that ministers had been warned that the American corn was on its way and that it posed a risk to health. Nigel Griffiths MP, Labour's spokesman on consumer affairs, will raise the matter in parliament by calling for a new government inquiry into the dangers of the American corn. "I want the Consumer Safety Unit at the Department of Trade and Industry to evaluate the threat to British consumers," he said. Yesterday, John Gummer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, went on BBC radio to pledge that he would not allow the US to export its genetically-modified maize to Britain. Mr Gummer said: "It is true that the Americans are trying to force this on to Europe without us making our own minds up about it. One of the important reasons for the EU is that we are strong enough to say to the Americans that we decide what

we want in our food chain and not you." Yesterday, The Independent revealed details of a memorandum to Mr Gummer written by Dr William Parish, of the DoE's Chemicals and Biotechnology Division, which warned: "[The maize] will be imported shortly despite the fact that it is not authorised in an unprocessed form and that the UK objected to proposals to authorise it." He adds: "There is bound to be concern that [the maize] represents a risk to human health and safety or to the environment." The genetically-altered product (GM Maize) has already been mixed with normal corn for export by American growers. British officials admit they cannot tell the difference once the two are mixed. The memo warned that the GM Maize was expected to arrive in Britain early this month. It states: "A selective ban on imports from the USA would remove an important source of raw material from the food and feed processing industry in the UK and raise trade questions. It is too late for those users awaiting their supplies of the US maize to secure other lines of supply at this stage." Boxes everywhere, page 9

## Only half a day's supply of blood left in South

Glenda Cooper

Stocks of blood have fallen so low in London and the South East that there is only just over half a day's supply left, the National Blood Service warned yesterday. It is restricting blood orders to hospitals to the minimum possible and warns that the next move could be to cancel all operations except emergencies. Donations in London have dropped by between 10 and 20 per cent which has coincided with a run on blood following the recent cold snap. Christmas and New Year is

traditionally one of the most difficult periods of the year for the blood transfusion service, where stocks can fall by as much as 30 per cent. But Peter Gibson, head of communications of the London and South East zone said that it was "unusual" that they were experiencing problems two to three weeks before the Christmas period. "This is very low going into the Christmas period," said Mr Gibson. "All it needs is a serious incident and we will be under a great deal of pressure and we cannot rely on other parts of the country to help us out." The London and South East

service launches its Christmas appeal today. Every day 10,000 units of blood a day are needed to supply hospitals but at present only 6 per cent of the population donate blood. Nationally, figures are slightly down with the National Blood Authority holding 13,500 units yesterday instead of 15,000 but a spokesman said there was no question of a national crisis. In Scotland blood supplies are also running desperately low as hospitals battle to cope with the E-coli 0157 outbreak, the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS) said yesterday. At the launch of

their national Christmas blood appeal, SNBTS said the outbreak was placing one of the "biggest ever" demands on blood products. "We just have to repeat our urgent message to encourage people to come forward and give blood," it said. The heaviest demand has been for plasma products where toxins produced by the E-coli bacteria are washed out the system using healthy plasma from frozen supplies. New donors are advised get in touch with their local blood service if they wish to donate, or ring the National Blood Authority on 0345 711 711.

## Crackdown on lottery ticket sales to children

Ian Burrell

A newsagent has been fined £500 for selling National Lottery tickets to a child in the first prosecution of its kind, just as Oflot, the lottery watchdog, ordered a crackdown on underage gambling. Undercover children are to be recruited to trap shopkeepers who sell tickets and scratch cards to under-16s and retailers will be required to display a hotline number which people can call if they witness underage sales. Oflot's director general, Peter Davis, described the existence of habitual young participants in the lottery as "disturbing". He said: "That these children also tend to be involved with alcohol, tobacco, drugs and fruit

machines, reinforces my determination to stamp out illegal and irresponsible behaviour by some traders." Yesterday a court in Leeds heard how two investigators from Camelot accompanied a 13-year-old girl into a newsagent's where she was sold an Ace High Instant ticket and a National Lottery draw ticket. Naheem Bashir, the shopowner admitted selling the tickets but claimed he thought the girl was old enough to buy them. Mary O'Shea, prosecuting for West Yorkshire Trading Standards, told Leeds Magistrates' Court that the police and then Camelot were tipped off by the girl's stepfather after she bought a ticket from N & N Newsagents, in Arnsley, Leeds, in March this year. She said:

"The girl was not asked her age even though in the investigators' view she does not look older than her 13 years." "Although he was of previously good character this case is a salutary lesson that one can never be too careful. This is not a bad man, but unfortunately he has fallen foul of the situation." Fining Bashir £250 for each of two offences of selling lottery tickets to a person under 16, with £325 costs, the chairman of the bench, Dr B Chaney, warned him that retailers had "an absolute obligation" to take care not to sell tickets to under-age customers. The Oflot warning followed new research which showed that 3 per cent of children were becoming persistent users of scratchcards.

## Carey pleads for the family

Andrew Brown  
Religious Affairs Correspondent

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, yesterday called in Rome for Catholics and Anglicans to fight together for family values. "Both our traditions place great emphasis on the family and family life. Anglicans can say with Pope John Paul that 'The future of the world and of the church passes through the family'." Dr Carey quoted several major Catholic documents in support of his argument for the importance of family life, delivered during a lecture at the Anglican Centre in Rome. Though he has publicly disagreed with Pope John Paul II on contraception and the role of women in the church, the importance of family life to both church and society is a theme the two leaders agree on. "The churches are ideally placed to make an essential contribution to understanding good parenting and faithful, loving relationships. The family is a paradigm of the Kingdom of God." Today he meets the Pope for substantive discussions. He also celebrates a eucharist in the chapel of the English College in Rome, training place for Catholic priests.



John Hurt as Merrick in The Elephant Man film

## Not the Elephant Man after all

Joseph Merrick, the 19th century Englishman known as the Elephant Man because of his grotesque appearance, did not suffer from the disease that is named after him, it was claimed yesterday. Radiologists in London say X-ray and CT scans of Merrick's remains suggest that he did not have neurofibromatosis, the disfiguring condition sometimes called Elephant Man disease. According to the experts

from the Royal London Hospital he suffered from a much rarer disease called Proteus syndrome. Neurofibromatosis causes uncontrolled growth of nerve cells, giving rise to unsightly tumours. There have been fewer than 100 recorded cases of Proteus syndrome, which involves the abnormal growth of bone and soft tissue. Both conditions are thought to be genetic. Merrick, who was portrayed

by John Hurt in the hit film The Elephant Man, died in 1890 at the London Hospital, where he lived for four years after being rescued from a life as a circus freak by the doctor Frederick Treves. His remains were kept at the hospital, now renamed the Royal London. The magazine New Scientist reported: "Sharma says that his skeleton shows the tell-tale signs of Proteus syndrome and lacks the characteristics that would be expected of someone

with neurofibromatosis. Merrick's skeleton is studded with bony outgrowths, predominantly on the right-hand side. His ring finger and femur are both enlarged, and his skull has a circumference of 91cm, compared to the 60cm typical for a man of his height." Merrick's spine was also not sharply curved, as would be expected in a case of neurofibromatosis, and his ribs lacked notches common in the condition.

In this week's Radio Times, Andrew Duncan reveals the personality behind the glasses of the Australian megastar and discovers some unusual findings.

RadioTimes

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT.



# Foreclosing on the human touch



Services withdrawn: Thousands of counter staff will disappear from banks and building societies over the next few years. Also doomed are the top-hatted staff of the discount houses and the familiar door-to-door premium collector

Jim Treanor  
Banking Correspondent

The changing and increasingly anonymous face of banking – the bank manager has all but disappeared from the local branch – has led to a big increase in complaints from customers about the standard of service they receive.

On the day that NatWest announced it was cutting 10,000 jobs, around a third of the workforce over four or five years, the Banking Ombudsman, the public's watchdog on the banking industry, this year received 22 per cent more telephone enquiries and complaints, and registered more than 7,000 complaints against banks, an increase of 8.0 per cent over last year.

NatWest is to close 300 branches, but Laurence Shurman, the Ombudsman, said closures were affecting both business and personal

## Big increase in bank complaints as staff disappear

customers, especially those he described as "vulnerable", such as the elderly. "Some of the worst instances of maladministration appear to stem from attempts to achieve greater efficiency by closure of branches, computerisation and other moves towards rationalisation," the Ombudsman said.

The days when the bank manager was one of the best-known characters in the local community are fast disappearing. The chances are the manager's branch will have been closed or merged with another branch. Biff, the banking union, calculates that nearly 3,000 high-street branches have been closed in the last six years, leaving just over 10,000 at the end of last year.

And almost all the major banks –

NatWest, Midland, Lloyds TSB and Barclays – plan to close more branches in the years ahead. The Co-operative Bank is going one stage further, closing all its branches and replacing them with "tardis" booths in which customers will communicate with managers via television screens.

The banks argue that they are closing branches because this is what customers want. Customers want bank via the telephone, not just for en-

quiries but to pay bills and alter direct debits. They want to bank outside office hours and importantly, they want the service to be cheap.

The industry is also becoming more competitive with retailers such

as Sainsbury offering banking services and building societies planning to become banks too.

"They are under pressure to deliver cost efficient services," Mr Shurman said. He warned, though, that the closure of branches in small towns could cause a conflict of interest for the one bank, say, remaining on the high street. This is because the one bank could be handling all the accounts of the businesses in the town.

Not all of the rise in complaints in banks was due to efficiency drives. Mr Shurman said 32 per cent of the complaints received were about mortgages and lending compared with only 8.5 per cent in 1989, when he first became Ombudsman. In contrast, complaints about cash ma-

chines were 6.5 per cent of the total compared with 36 per cent in 1992.

Mr Shurman is recommending that the "Code of Banking Practice" be changed to require banks to give customers a "reason why" letter to explain why they have been recommended to take out a particular type of mortgage.

Of the complaints made, just 736 were accepted for full investigation because of a greater willingness by banks to resolve complaints by agreement and because complainants have not always exhausted the bank's internal procedures when they approach the Ombudsman.

The smallest compensation award was £15 while the highest was £56,740. But because the Ombudsman had to turn some large complaints away during the year, Mr Shurman wants the jurisdiction of the office increased from £100,000 to £150,000.

## The City's traditional money men to go

An old City tradition will disappear early next year, when the Bank of England abolishes the last formal privileges of a seven-strong band of discount houses, in the biggest reform of the money markets for more than a century, writes Peter Rodgers.

The discount houses are banking intermediaries used by the Bank of England since at least the late-19th century to control interest rates set by the big clearing banks. They operate a specialist market at the heart of the City. The discount house brokers kept up the tradition of visiting the Bank of England in silk top hats until as

recently as 1992, when business was switched entirely to the telephone and the top hats were shelved.

Under reforms announced yesterday, the Bank of England will open up the short-term sterling money markets to dozens of banks, building societies and securities firms, of UK and continental ownership. The discount houses will have to fight to survive against the new competition. The Bank said the new system would bring the setting of sterling interest rates into line with techniques expected to be adopted for the euro after monetary union.

Business, page 21

## ...and it's goodbye, too, to the Man from the Pru

Clifford German

The Man From the Pru, one of the most enduring features of the financial-services industry, and better known until a generation ago to millions of working-class families than the bank or building-society manager, may well be retired.

Collecting monthly insurance premiums from door to door in all weathers is now time-consuming, inefficient and expensive. Salesmen earn substantial salaries, and are no longer willing to travel from door to door equipped with a bicycle and a battered brown attaché case. In many areas collecting cash from door to door is downright dangerous.

It is now much more efficient

to collect premiums electronically from a bank or building-society account, and the costs of operating policies after deducting the salesman's commission now swallow an excessively large proportion of the premiums. In a cost and competition conscious world where insurance providers are obliged to show the charges they take out of insurance funds, and they are increasingly judged by their skills in building up cash values, the traditional door to door sales methods are increasingly poor value.

The Co-op now employs the largest direct salesforce, with 5,800 door to door agents. The Prudential, which was the largest single provider of industrial life policies, no longer

sells cash or "lection" policies, but still employs 1,250 salesmen and women to go round collecting premiums on existing policies.

Most policy-holders now have bank or building society accounts, but many families have more than one policy with different maturity dates to meet specific needs. An estimated 45 million policies are still in existence, and provide a lifeline for families who regard an insurance policy as the traditional way of saving money for special occasions and buying life assurance to help cushion the loss of a breadwinner.

Until now however it has been impossible to change the method of payment while maintaining an existing policy. New

government proposals will make it possible for policy-holders to pay by direct debit or standing order and to pay at less frequent intervals. Insurance companies which operate industrial life policies would also be permitted to pool their industrial life policy funds with other policy premiums and manage them more efficiently.

Policy-holders who still prefer to have their premiums collected will not be obliged to alter their payments, but the changes are expected to lead to a sharp drop in the number of new policies sold and a fall in the numbers of salesmen employed. But the man from the Pru does not necessarily face redundancy, a spokesman said. Most will be redeployed in office work.

## Curry is not so hot as the British stick to pub grub

Ian Burrell

The television schedules may be full of programmes teaching exotic cookery secrets, magazines might carry features on celebrity chefs and describe cookery as the "new rock 'n' roll", but this is just the gloss on the chicken in aspic: the sad truth is that Britain's food revolution has not totally passed the country by. A two-year study by researchers at the University of Lancaster found that 48 per cent of Britons had not eaten a single meal in an Indian, Chinese, Italian or any other restaurant serving foreign cuisine in the past year.

Even the cheaper prices of a takeaway could not tempt the taste buds of 27 per cent of the population, who said they had either never tried one or had not touched one for at least a year. While the chatter in Kensington is about the relative merits of tempura at the nearest sushi bar or Gang Penang Gung at a favourite Thai eatery, much of the rest of the country is still resolutely tucking into the classic British "meat and two veg".

In Bristol, widely regarded as a cosmopolitan city, 61 per cent of the population admit to shunning foreign restaurants. In Preston, where there is a wide choice of tandoori cooking, 51 per cent of people never partake of it. Or of any other ethnic food. Professor Alan Warde, who headed the research team, said: "There is a sufficiently high level of abstention from foreign foods, and an enduring popularity of the English public house in the provinces at least, to suggest that exotic tastes are still far from thoroughly diffused among the British population."

Researchers interviewed more than 1,000 people in London, Bristol and Preston about their eating-out habits. The findings show that the working class in particular has shown a marked disinterest in the influx of international cuisine.

More than two-thirds (68 per cent) of semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers said they avoided "ethnic" restaurants. Only 4 per cent said they had eaten in all four categories (Indian, Chinese, Italian and other ethnic) in the past year.

Most skilled manual workers (57 per cent) and junior white collar workers (55 per cent) also shunned foreign food. Even among professionals there was a sizeable minority (22 per cent) who had not visited an ethnic restaurant for at least a year. The favoured locations for a meal on remain the pub or the old-fashioned tea shop.

Michael Barry, host of the BBC's *Food and Drink* programme, said much of today's pub grub originated from overseas. "Lasagne, moussaka, chilli con carne and all those minced-meat based dishes from around the world now tend to be taken for granted as English food," he said.

In the study, Indian restaurants were used by 33 per cent of respondents, Italian by 31 per cent, and Chinese by 29 per cent. The rapid growth and increasing variety of international cuisine is being supported by a dedicated hard core of mainly middle-class "foodies".

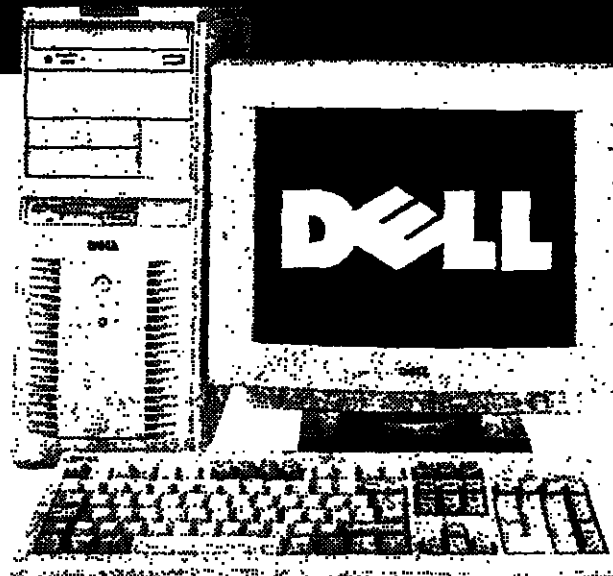
The Lancaster researchers found that 34 per cent of professionals had eaten in all four categories of ethnic restaurant in the past year.



The research, to be published early next year, showed that foodies are likely to have been educated at selective or private school, be aged between 30-49, and have parents from the professional classes. Most of them live in London, which has the greatest variety of ethnic restaurants and where 70 per cent of respondents had tried at least one foreign restaurant.

"If learned acceptability of ethnic food, or its frequent consumption, is an indicator of multiculturalism, then its extent is still limited," Professor Warde said. He concluded that there was still "widespread conservatism in taste among the English population". Pass the chips.

## Budget problem. Finance solution.



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# Man with machete 'planned a Dunblane'

A man's machete attack on infants having a teddy bears' picnic had "copy-cat" elements in common with Thomas Hamilton's murders at Dunblane, a court heard yesterday.

Three children, aged between three and four, and four adults were injured in Horrett Campbell's rampage at St Luke's Church of England infants school in Blakenhall, Wolverhampton, on 8 July.

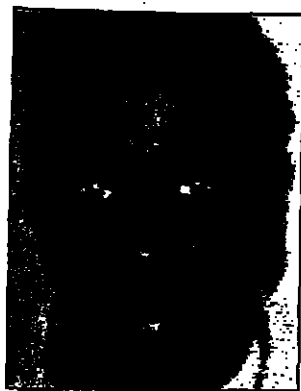
Campbell, 33, of Villiers House, a tower block overlooking the playground of the school, pleads not guilty to seven charges of attempted murder. He has admitted causing grievous bodily harm with intent and one charge of attempting to cause grievous bodily harm.

Richard Wakerley QC, for the prosecution, told Stafford Crown Court that police found two newspaper cuttings attached to the wall in his flat, one about Michael Bryant, who killed 35 people in Tasmania, and the other about Hamilton. His attack had other similarities with theirs.

Those injured by Campbell were Ahmed Malek, three, Rhena Chopra and Francesca Quintyne-Pear, both four, Rhena's mother Surinder Chopra, Azra Rafiq, Wendy Willington, all 29, and Lisa Potts, 21, a teacher.

Mr Wakerley said a class of 20 children were in a grass area at the side of the school

Copy-cat elements in nursery attack, jury told



Horrett Campbell: Hid in flat

having a teddy bears' picnic that afternoon.

Campbell left his flat carrying a light bag which held a machete, a large knife and a washing-up liquid bottle containing petrol. There were two bars with sponges attached which could be used, he said, as "a sort of fire bomb".

He went up to Azra Rafiq and Surinder Kaur, and struck them on the head from behind.

He then ran towards another mother, Wendy Willington, waiting with her young child. Mrs Willington threw herself on the ground, covering her child.

Miss Potts began shepherd-

ing the children into the school. Campbell went towards her, striking out at Ahmed Malik, leaving him with deep lacerations to the arm and to the head. His skull was fractured.

Campbell then struck out at Rhena Kaur-Chopra, daughter of Surinder, slicing her across the side of her face.

Miss Potts was still bringing children inside. Mr Wakerley said to the jury: "You may well be astonished by the courage of that young girl as she could so easily have shut that door, gone further inside to find help, gone to her headmistress."

Mr Wakerley continued: "She then realised young children were still outside with this man waving the machete and she went out again. She completely, you may think, disregarded her own safety."

"But for her action this tragedy could have been so much worse. She went back outside the school as the children clung to her. She pushed some of them back inside and gathered others up in her arms."

But Campbell approached and struck her with his machete on her head, back and arms. Mr Wakerley added: "Notwithstanding that, she continued to drag the other little children back to school into the doorway and pulled it hard to close it."

Campbell struck out at Francesca Quintyne with his machete. Her jaw was fractured and part of her ear cut off.

He returned to his flat, lighting two small fires in the tower block as a diversion. He remained hidden in the block until the next day, when he was arrested.

Mr Wakerley said the jury might decide he was mentally unbalanced during the attack. He added: "But we suggest that the true question is not why he did it but in striking these people did he intend to kill them? If that intent was to kill, then it is attempted murder."

In police interviews Campbell described how he had thought about the attack for up to a month before.

Mr Wakerley added: "He thought that the school had turned against him because young children had jeered at him when he walked past."

Mr Wakerley added: "He told the police that he thought both Hamilton and Bryant had been misunderstood by society... They had been driven to do what they did, namely indiscriminately kill others, just as he had been driven to do what he did. There are elements of copy-cat here, are there not?"

The trial continues.

## Albert Hall premiere with spots on



Dog's life: Reshooting Disney's cartoon classics with real people and animals could regenerate the entire back catalogue

David Lister  
Arts News Editor

What do you do when everyone has seen the original movie? You release the film on video naturally, and if you're fun-loving Walt Disney you let it be known *Cruella De Vil*-style that you had better buy it quickly as it might be withdrawn at any moment.

And when all the times have been given their 101 Dalmatians video for Christmas? You release the film again, only this time with real people, and genuine canines.

Whoever had this profit-maximising idea should be rising rapidly up the Disney corporation.

The scope is endless. Sixty years of movies to re-shoot with Hollywood's finest and a forest of wannabe animals. Gwyneth Paltrow as Snow White, with Danny De Vito leading the seven dwarfs. *Genuine deer for Bambi*, with a guest appearance from Prince William playing the hunter perhaps?

As if real stars and real dogs were not enough, Disney also announced that last night's premiere at the Royal Albert Hall, attended by Glenn Close, Jeff Daniels, Joely Richardson and the rest of the cast, was the first of their "Event Movies".

By the term Event, they meant that the Albert Hall was being used for a film premiere for the first time since 1927 and Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* - and not the fact that Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall attended together.

As part of "The Event", the £60m movie was followed by a themed party, held with no great thematic significance at the Royal Geographical Society, but with a catwalk show (catwalk perhaps not the perfect theme for the ultimate doggy movie) with models showing off dalmatian out-

fits designed by Vivienne Westwood, Katherine Hamnett et al.

The film has already broken box office records in America, or at least one uniquely American box-office record. It is the biggest Thanksgiving movie of all time, amassing \$46m over the five day holiday last month.

It may usher in a new era in Britain too. Seeing a movie at the Royal Albert Hall with its rows of private boxes showed that there could be a future in watching movies with a group of friends or contacts, drinking and eating all the while. The age of corporate cinema could be upon us.

### Dalmatian facts and fiction

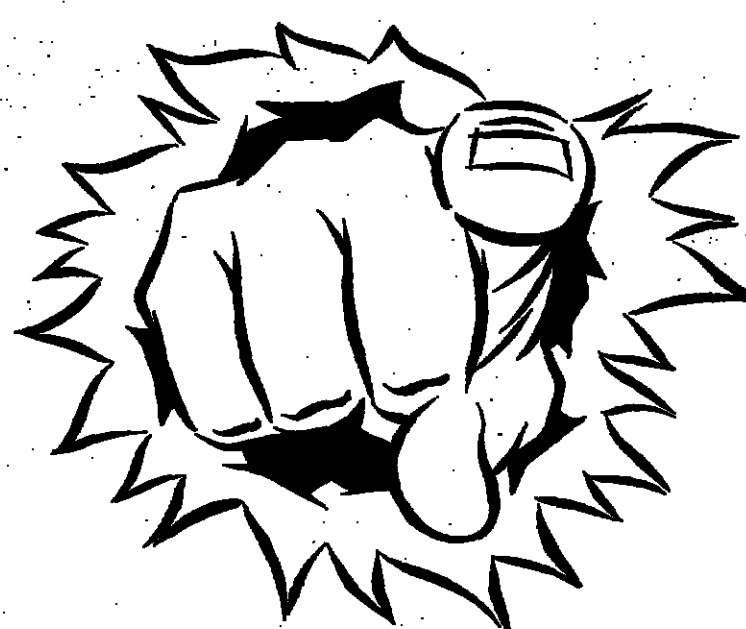
- Over 200 dalmatians were used in the making of the live action film.
- Whelp born, the puppies do not appear to have spots at all, they are all white. The first spots are not obvious until 10 days old.
- 6,469,952 black spots were drawn by Disney animators for the 1961 cartoon.
- A dalmatian's skin is pink with bluish-black spots which correspond to its coat.
- An adult will grow to 60lbs and 24 to 25 inches tall at the shoulder.
- About one in ten suffers from deafness - a disability connected with their white coats.
- Nicknames: English coach dog, firehouse dog, plum-pudding dog, and spotted dick.

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صكتان من الامل



# The only passengers now arriving on Eurostar: Mrs Marvel Crumpacker and daughter

Ian Burrell

The first Eurostar passenger service to run since the Channel Tunnel fire arrived in Paris yesterday, 15 minutes late and carrying only four passengers.

The 5.50am from London Waterloo left on time with 15 train crew and 10 reporters, but not a single paying passenger on its 800 seats.

It was not until the scheduled stop at Ashford in Kent that Mrs Marvel Crumpacker, 58, a tourist from Fort Wayne, Indiana, and her pregnant daughter, Denise Bouwres, 35, climbed on board for a day-trip to Paris. Eurostar staff promptly rushed forward with a bottle of champagne to help them celebrate. A somewhat bewildered Mrs Crumpacker said: "I was surprised when we arrived at Ashford station and it was so empty. We thought it would be busy. We are going home tomorrow and this was our last chance to go to Paris. Friends booked us tickets on Monday but we couldn't go. We didn't realise this was the first train."

The journey held no fear for them, said her daughter. "We don't feel nervous at all," she said. "We've heard a lot about Eurostar in the States and I saw it in the film *Mission Impossible*. After a 30-minute journey through the tunnel, the train picked up two more passengers at Calais. There was no sign of any damage from last month's disastrous fire which caused millions of pounds worth of damage and forced one of the two tunnels to close for extensive repairs. The train was, however, obliged to drop its speed from 100mph to 60mph as it travelled through the undamaged tunnel in the area of the fire. Eurostar

claimed that the lack of passengers was because safety officials only agreed at 6pm on Tuesday for passenger services to restart. People had not had a chance to book, it was said.

Fiona McCallum, 33, the train manager, said that she had never known such a scarcity of customers. "We usually have about 200 passengers, mostly business people, on this train," she complained.

Eurostar spokesman Roger Harrison said trains had to run regardless of the number of passengers to ensure rolling stock and crew were in the right place to meet timetable commitments. Mr Harrison said that he expected more people to be using services later.

As Mrs Crumpacker and the other three passengers arrived at the Gare du Nord station in Paris, they were greeted with the sight of ranks of police and soldiers armed with automatic weapons and knives, who had been drafted in after Tuesday night's attack on the Paris underground. Trains are expected to run up to half-an-hour late while repairs are undertaken to damaged track. Full Channel Tunnel services may not run for as long as five months.

Eurotunnel co-chairman, Robert Malpas, said that work on repairing the fire-hit section of the tunnel would take "three to five months", and that when passenger shuttle trains start running again next Tuesday, the company will have about two-thirds of a normal service going through the tunnel.

Both Mr Malpas and Eurostar UK deputy chairman, Adam Mills, strongly refuted suggestions that their companies were putting profits before safety in recommending Channel Tunnel services.



Champagne reception: Denise Bouwres (left) and Marvel Crumpacker, from Indiana, US, the first passengers on Eurostar since the fire 17 days ago. Photograph: AP

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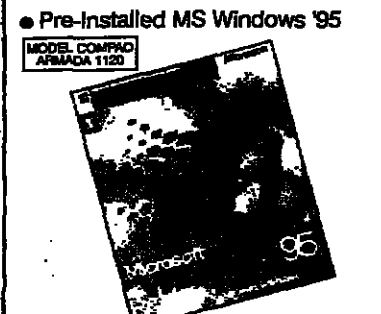
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## Payments scandal reaches president

Alan Murdoch  
Dublin

An IR£10,000 contribution to the Irish Labour Party for the 1990 Presidential election campaign of Mary Robinson was among the numerous political contributions made by supermarket group Dunnes Stores, it was disclosed yesterday.

Reports claim that a total of 12 politicians and different parties received payments totalling IR£5m (£5,000m) when the firm was being run by Ben Dunne, who was ousted as chairman in 1993 after a drugs and sex scandal. The Labour Party confirmed the payment yesterday, following reports that Dunne's payments went beyond those to transport minister Michael Lowry who resigned last Saturday.

A former Fianna Fail minister, dubbed simply "You Know Who" in yesterday's newspaper headlines, has so far declined to respond to calls from his own party to explain the IR£1.1m payments he received from Dunnes. The payments were detailed in an accountants' report after unusual cheque payments were noted after Mr Dunne's departure.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Dick Spring, spoke with a member of the Dunnes family yesterday and said afterwards: "They [Dunnes] want to co-operate in every way possible to clear up these matters. They understand the pall of suspicion over the body politic because of these allegations." He added: "It's an appalling situation that reflects very badly on the body politic. It is in every politician's interest that the information now being spoken about in the back of the bar is put into the public domain where it can be dealt with."

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صوتنا من الامم



# Demand at the dinner table leaves sharks in the soup

Nicholas Schoon  
Environment Correspondent

The world's most feared predator, the shark, is increasingly endangered by mankind, says a report by wildlife investigators published today.

Catches are rising rapidly as the demand for the sharks' dorsal fins for soup, oil from their large livers, skin, cartilage and meat all grow, says the document from Traffic, the Cambridge-based wildlife trade monitoring organisation.

Yet there are no international agreements between countries setting limits on the catches, and the monitoring of the numbers caught is very poor. Traffic puts the figure at somewhere between 30 million and 70 million a year.

Most of the slaughter is accidental, with the predators caught up in nets put out for other fish. But shark's fin is regarded as a delicacy in some countries and trade has more than doubled in the 15 years up



to 1995. The fin trade centres on Hong Kong, where a bowl of shark's fin soup can cost up to £60, while the fins themselves can sell for more than £300 a kilo. The colony also imports and exports them from and to dozens of countries.

Sharks can easily be over-exploited because they are not prolific breeders and grow slowly. This autumn, several shark species - there are nearly 400 in all - were added to the official Red List of threatened animals. These include the huge basking shark, a plankton feeder which swims close in-

## The hunter that became the hunted

Most classification systems divide fish into three classes: jawless, cartilaginous, and bony. Sharks fall into the cartilaginous category, Class Chondrichthyes. There are nearly 400 species of shark distributed over tropical and temperate zones, particularly around New Zealand and South Africa, belonging to 19 separate families.

The great white shark is the largest predatory fish. It grows up to 15ft in length and weighs up to 1,700lb. At least 1,000 people are killed annually by sharks, 70-80 per cent of them off the coast of Africa, South America and Asia. Waters around Australia are especially dangerous; since 1898 at least 420 people have died there after being attacked.

shore around Britain in the summer, and the largest of the fish- and man-eating sharks, the great white. Both of these species are categorised as "vulnerable" - the least-threatened level on the Red List. Four species of sawfish, which are relatives of the shark, and four shark species are classed as endangered, or critically endangered.

The government of the Isle of Man has officially asked the

British Government to apply to have the basking shark listed under the Cites treaty, the international agreement which seeks to control or ban the trade in endangered wildlife. Dozens of the huge, harmless fish, which can weigh several tonnes, arrive in the waters of the Irish Sea around the island in the summer, but local laws prevent them from being caught within the island's 12-mile limit. They are killed for the large

quantities of oil in their liver. The Government has not yet decided whether to apply for a Cites listing. There's a desperate need for basic information to assess the threat posed by the global trade, said Steven Broad, director of Traffic, which is part funded by the World Wide Fund for Nature. "What we do know is that the trade is vast ... and most fisheries are unmanaged and unmonitored."



Taking the bait: The great white shark is now on the Red List of threatened species

## Police raid home of gun-lobby campaigner

Jason Bennetto  
Crime Correspondent

Police have seized more than 200 weapons and 30,000 bullets from the home and business of one of Britain's leading pro-gun campaigners.

Richard Law, the outspoken secretary of the Shooters' Rights Association, which has been fighting to reverse a government Bill to ban most handguns, was arrested by investigating officers and later released on bail.

It emerged afterwards that Mr Law had his gun licence revoked by the Metropolitan Police in 1983 after he was caught carrying two revolvers at a market in London.

Mr Law yesterday accused the police of a "classic harassment" campaign aimed at disrupting his organisation's attempts to defeat the Firearms Bill currently going through Parliament.

Six police officers confiscated all Mr Law's weapons on Tuesday from his gun shop and home at Llanerchymeddwy Llanerchymeddwy, west Wales. Weapons, including pistols, rifles, shotguns and swords, worth up to £100,000 were taken during the operation on his Home Office-approved firing range and dealership.

Among the guns were a collection for export to France. Under the Firearms Bill handguns must be sold to foreign dealers or destroyed by the police for compensation. There is concern that vast numbers of firearms held in Britain will be transferred to Europe and the US.

Police also revoked his gun and gun-dealing licence, and the shotgun and firearms certificates for his wife Elizabeth and shotgun certificate for his daughter Helen. The police argue that the family are not fit and proper people to hold firearms licences. Mr Law will appeal against that decision in court. A computer, files and licences relating to Mr Law's

work as a gun dealer and firearms expert witness were also taken, he said.

Mr Law, 44, whose wife planned at one point to stand as a gun-lobby candidate at Dunblane in the general election, said he had been served notice revoking licences for weapons in his armoury.

His premises were searched by 24 officers and he was arrested three hours later in connection with another incident before being bailed to return on 10 February to his local police station. The police had removed a number of firearms from his business about a month ago.

Mr Law said yesterday: "This looks to me like old fashioned harassment. There is a connection that this happened the day before the report stage of the Firearms Bill." He said he had licences for all of the weapons seized.

"They were looking for a way of closing us down. Which they have succeeded in doing. Without the tools of my trade I will be signing on the dole today."

He confirmed that he had his licence revoked while living in London and had been prosecuted in court, but argued it was a misunderstanding and an "occupational hazard".

The Shooters' Rights Association has led opposition to the Dunblane parents' calls for a complete handgun ban.

Ann Pearson of the Snowdrop Campaign, which wants to ban all firearms, welcomed the raid, and said: "It seems quite justified that he has had his licences revoked. I just hope he doesn't get them back on appeal."

A spokesman for Dyfed Powys police denied there was any campaign against Mr Law. A statement said: "As a result, a number of firearms and dealer-related certificates connected with the premises have been revoked and all weapons and ammunition at the premises have been removed by the police."

## THE INDEPENDENT

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# Eurostar. Back with 20 trains daily.



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Although we can return to a schedule of 20 trains daily, operational constraints have required slight revisions in our timetable. For example, if you were booked on the 05.08 from Waterloo, your new departure time is 05.50. See below for your new train time.

PARIS				
Prev. Train No.	New Train No.	Orig. Waterloo departure	New Waterloo departure	New Ashford departure
9078	9078	05.08	05.50	06.53
9002	9004	06.19	06.57	07.57
9006	9008	07.23	07.53	08.53
9010	9012	08.23	08.57	09.57
9012	9012	08.53	08.57	09.57
9018	9016	10.23	09.53	-
9024	9024	11.57	11.57	12.57
9028	9028	12.53	12.53	13.53
9032	9032	13.57	13.57	-
-	9036	-	14.57	-
9038	9040	15.23	15.53	-
9042	9044	16.23	16.48	17.57
9046	9048	17.15	17.48	-
9048	9048	17.48	17.48	-
9052	9052	18.53	18.57	19.57
BRUSSELS				
Prev. Train No.	New Train No.	Orig. Waterloo departure	New Waterloo departure	New Ashford departure
9110	9110	06.53	06.53	07.53
9116	9118	08.27	08.53	09.53
9120	9186	09.27	09.57	10.57
9124	9130	10.27	11.53	12.53
9132	9142	12.27	14.53	-*
9140	9142	14.23	14.53	-
9152	9152	17.19	17.19	-
9156	9158	18.27	18.53	19.54
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*13.27 travellers from Ashford, now travel on the 19.54 from Ashford.				

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صكنا من الامم



# Little boxes everywhere (even the cows look alike)

John Gummer rails against the monotonous condition of a too-neat Britain

Stephen Goodwin  
Heritage Correspondent

The drift to uniformity in town and country epitomised by the housing estate home of Ford Mondeo man and fields of oilseed rape came under scathing attack yesterday at the launch of a new map charting the character of England.

John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, railed against the order and the neat, and said children were being left a "terrible legacy" by volume housebuilders. "If you were taken blindfold to the centre of most recent private developments you would find it impossible to know whether you were in Carlisle or Chatham," Mr Gummer said. Any difference would not be due to a sense of place but "merely connected with the marketing strategy" of the builder.

More biting criticism came from Richard Wakeford, chief executive of the Countryside Commission, one of the two government agencies which combined to produce the map.

Decisions taken from the marketplace and the debating chamber were causing a "creeping and insidious trend towards uniformity", Mr Wakeford said.

"Modern, mass-produced housing - with just a touch of the vernacular if we are lucky - is a backdrop to



Mondeo land: This housing development in Rochester, Kent, could be anywhere in the country. Even breeds of cattle are losing their regional identity. Main photograph: David Rose

the Ford Mondeo parked outside, by the *cupressus leylandii* hedge. Every high street seems to contain the same stores.

"In the countryside, the colours of cows now give no clue as to where

they are munching: the crops that are planted owe more to Brussels than to our regional differences in England. We are losing our diversity.

Lincoln Reds are almost a rare breed now in the fields of their native

Lincolnshire. And other cattle with county associations, such as the Hereford, are going the same way.

The map, produced by the commission and English Nature at a cost of about £100,000 each, ignores

county boundaries and divides the country into 159 areas with a common wildlife, landscape, and to some extent, cultural characteristics.

Some areas, such as the South Downs, Fens or New Forest might

be thought to be readily identifiable without a map. But the agencies point to others such as the Southern Magnesian Limestone Ridge which might not. It runs north from Nottingham for about 100 miles yet is only eight miles wide.

It is typified by rolling hills cut through by river gorges, more woodland than surrounding areas, limestone villages and plants such as lily of the valley and bluebells. The limestone is also a source of the clean water needed by the renowned regional breweries at Tadcaster and Masham.

Defending the map against doubts about its practical value, the agency heads maintained it would be an important tool in making better decisions about guiding landscape

change and protecting wildlife. Both agencies began separate work on maps in 1994 but joined forces two years ago on realising the scope for confusion.

Mr Gummer insisted the map was "not a means of getting out of the proper protection of special places", and that statutory landscape and habitat designations would not be affected.

However, the map is likely to be used in formulating planning guidance - to help reinforce local identities and perhaps fire the "passionate sense of local loyalty" which Mr Gummer regretted the English did not share with the French.

## Lessons for teachers on school security

Judith Judd  
Education Editor

Teachers will be trained to deal with violent intruders, ministers promised yesterday.

Robin Squire, the schools minister, said that some of the £66m being allocated for security would be used specifically for the purpose. But personal safety advisers warned that they should not be given lessons in self-defence.

Experts from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, which is involved in a school security research project for the Government, said that training in self-defence could be worse than useless.

They were speaking outside a national conference on school security held almost exactly a year after the murder of the London headmaster, Philip Lawrence, which led to the establishment of a government working party on school security.

Tony Dickens, of the Suzy

Lamplugh Trust, said: "The message is about awareness and avoidance. It is not about self-defence."

"You can get hurt if you use self-defence. And then there is the question of what is 'reasonable' force which you are allowed to use to defend yourself."

Instead, he said, it was better to train teachers in how to defuse aggression. Schools in Cumbria, for instance, used the strategy of sending a child to deliver a book to the teacher in the next class if either a pupil or parent threatened violence.

That meant that help was summoned and everyone calmed down.

Teachers interviewing difficult parents should always do so in a room with a glass panel and ensure that someone came in regularly to check all was well.

John Andrew, general secretary of the Professional Association of Teachers, agreed that teachers should not be

"brave little heroes". And he added: "Part of the training has to be not only what to do but what not to do. There are circumstances where the best thing to do is to walk away."

Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, said: "No one can rule out any incident in any school."

"What all of us want to feel is that we have done all we sensibly, reasonably can - while keeping a school a happy and reasonable place."

She said the Government was prepared to consider changes in the law to give police any extra powers they might need to improve school security.

Research being carried out by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust with academics at Leicester University, is investigating the type of violent incidents which arise in schools. Mr Dickens said that he believed there was a considerable amount of under-reporting.



A farewell to oaks: the native tree that symbolises our supposed national virtues - strength, power and endurance - is under threat. Thomas Pakenham has photographed his favourite examples across Britain

Thirty years ago Ken Loach made a film about a Liverpool dock workers' strike. This year they are on strike again and he has been back to make another film. The differences between the two are a social history of our times



Party time for New York high society is not without its tiffs and tears: we tell the story of the Costume Institute Ball and the battle over who will be queen for the night

Plus: meet the lamp that thinks it's a chair in the home of the future

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**THERE'S A GREAT DEAL GOING ON THIS CHRISTMAS**

# The phone rings: it could be another beaten child or an abused daughter



Saving the children: The Child Protection Helpline deals with 57,000 calls a year and costs £1m to run. The pictures above were posed by models



Photographs: NSPCC

"Oh dear, yes, I have been busy..." "So you're saying the child has sleeping difficulties. Is that it?" "I appreciate you're at the end of your tether..." "How high was the cupboard?"

## Clare Garner on the NSPCC hotline where the calls come thick and fast

leaves 82,000 cries for help unanswered. A total of 7,621 of the 57,000 Child Protection Helpline calls answered last year were concerning child abuse, be it sexual, physical, emotional or neglect. The other 49,379 were about child care - from requests

for NSPCC information, requests for legal advice to reports of adult survivors of child abuse.

On average, the helpline - which costs £1m a year to run - refers between 100 and 120 cases each week to the social services, police and its own child protection teams and pro-

jects. The phone bill alone is £90,000.

Mary, 59, is a trained social worker who joined the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline six years ago. To callers, she is just an anonymous voice. But Mary is also a human being with feel-

ings and emotions of her own. Spending all day listening to other people's concerns has left Mary reluctant to speak of her personal affairs. "I didn't know I thought all this till I said it out loud to you," she said, interrupting herself.

"I am human. So when I put the phone down, say after a 45-minute call, I can be quite moved by what the person said to me. I can't just pick the pieces up and deal with something else - I've no idea what it's going to be - so I gate the phone for a short time while I empty my head a bit."

She has been in the NSPCC headquarters, near Cannon Street tube station in London, since 9am. Whatever time of the day or night, on whatever day of the year, the scene is the same. It's a timeless zone, up and running 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The office is unglamorous. Six desks with six headsets, telephones and computers on them in a medium-sized room looking out on a grim, concrete car park. Rows of multi-coloured information files for different areas of the country line the far end of the room, above which is a large digital clock displaying both the date and the time.

In contrast to the predictable surroundings, no one knows what to expect when they pick up the phone.

"The phone rings and it could be someone saying: 'I hear this child next door crying all the time and a lot of banging. I don't want to get involved, here's the address,'" said Mary.

"Or you could get a mother who has just found out that her daughter has been sexually abused by dad. I'm just holding her distress and, really before she has realised it, realising that there are going to be so many ripples from that allegation."

Mary listens, takes notes and provides the caller with the necessary information where she can. She never talks about herself to callers. "I'd never ever

say to anyone 'I had an accident and felt like that', or 'I've got daughters. I know what you mean'. I don't think people want to know about me."

If a call comes through at 12.25pm, her 12.30 lunchbreak is postponed. Sometimes it's hard to go back to work after the break.

Tears welled up in her eyes as she admitted: "If the callers have been particularly distressed in the morning there's a danger of thinking: 'Is everybody like this? Is any child safe?' Is there nothing light about this job? Occasionally I might feel like that, but once I get back on the telephone, you start again."

After Mary logs off, she tries to forget her work. Sometimes that's hard. "We don't get much feedback. We often don't hear what happens," she said.

At other times it is easier. "When someone rings back, be it to say 'Yes, the child left on its own', or 'Yes, the father's arrested, she was sexually

'When I put the phone down, I can't just pick up the pieces and deal with something else'

abused', it's only then you realise how valuable your intervention has been."

The Child Protection Helpline costs £1m a year to run. The phone bill alone is £90,000 a year. Please give generously.

If anyone has any concerns about the welfare of children then they can contact the national child protection helpline at any time. The freephone number is 0800 800 500.

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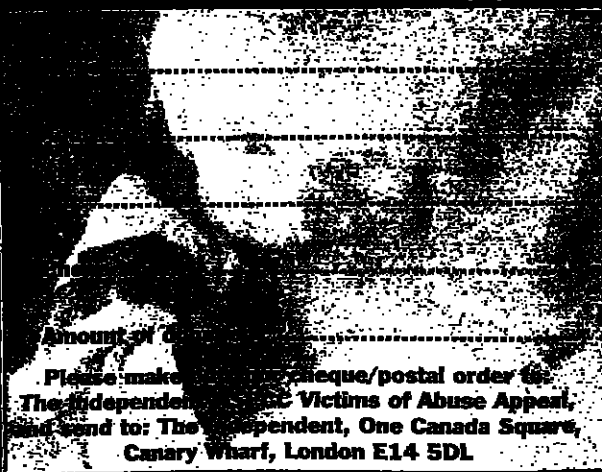
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## DAILY POEM

### Monopoly

By Paul Farley

We sat like slum landlords around the board  
buying each other out with fake banknotes,  
until we lost more than we could afford  
or ever hope to pay back. Now our seats  
are empty - one by one we left the game  
to play for real, at first completely lost  
in this other world, its building sites, its rain;  
but slowly learned the rules or made our own,  
stayed out of jail and kept our noses clean.  
And now there's only me - sole freeholder  
of every empty office space in town,  
and from the quayside I can count the cost  
each low tide brings - the skeletons and rust  
of boats, cars, hats, boots, iron, a terrier.

Paul Farley was born in Liverpool in 1965 and studied painting at the Chelsea School of Art. He has worked as a cinema usher, courier, scene painter, spider wrangler and librarian, and began writing poetry after attending Michael Donaghy's City University Poetry Workshop. He won the Arvon/Observer Poetry Competition in 1995 and this year was chosen by Poetry Review as one of their new poets of the year. Tonight he reads, with Tracey Herd, in the Voice Box on the South Bank at 7.30pm.



# Ministers' car boot sale to appease MPs

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

The Government's departments in Whitehall risk becoming like a car boot sale after the disclosure that Nicholas Winterton, the outspoken Tory MP for Macclesfield, forced the Transport Minister, to reprieve an £8 million road in his constituency.

With the Government's majority reduced to one, Mr Winterton, a maverick backbencher, in effect held the Government to ransom before the vote on the Budget.

The Department of Transport yesterday confirmed Mr Watts had put the improvements on the A523 between Macclesfield and Poynton back into the roads programme after heavy lobbying by the MP.

Having secured his road, Mr Winterton happily voted with the Government. But two Tory MPs are on the warpath over their local hospital.

The Department of Health will face renewed pressure tomorrow in a Commons debate for the rescue of the casualty unit at Edgware Hospital by Sir John Gort and Hugh Dykes, the two MPs who caused a fuss over the threatened closure of the hospital in the summer.

Mr Gort privately made it clear he

## Backbencher wins by-pass after threat before Budget vote

Stephan Dorrell, the Health Secretary, was engaged in heavy negotiations with the MPs and announced in the summer that there would be a 24-hour casualty unit, there would be GP supervision instead of nurses, there would be maternity provision and provision of beds for the elderly.

But MPs reported that Mr Gort was engaged in a heated conversation with Mr Dorrell during a division on the Budget.

One ministerial source said: "He doesn't want to lose this hospital. He wants to retain a full acute hospital. Whether he is still angry about it, and will cause trouble to the Government, we will have to see."

The junior health minister, John Horgan, is due to answer the debate but last night the Government had no plans to improve its offer.

Judging by the success of Mr Winterton, it can only be a matter of time. Labour campaign spokesman, Brian Wilson, said the Government was now vulnerable to any backbencher who chooses to apply blackmail.

John Major's majority could be wiped out by the Barnsley East by-election next Thursday.

Tory MPs could be lining up with the shopping list of constituency demands.

But the most pressing case is for the Ulster Unionists, on whose support Mr Major will have to depend to ensure the Government survives until a general election next May.



Lone voice: A demonstrator at the Department of Trade and Industry in Westminster yesterday, highlighting the granting of export licences for arms for Indonesia on the 21st anniversary of its invasion of East Timor. Photograph: PA

## Euro-budget hit by losses through fraud

Christian Wolmar  
Westminster Correspondent

The European Community's £47bn annual spending is becoming increasingly vulnerable to losses through fraud, an all-party group of MPs said yesterday.

In a report which will be welcomed by Eurosceptic MPs, the Public Accounts Committee argues that existing measures to combat fraud, particularly from funds paid to farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy, are inadequate because the procedures are too complex and unworkable.

The MPs found that CAP payments, which cost £32.5bn during the current year, are governed by more than 3,000 regulations, and the Court of Auditors, which oversees European Union expenditure, "had major difficulties in ensuring eligibility through inspections of final recipients. Not only [were the payments] difficult to audit effectively, but the scale of operations across the Community and the complexity of the regulations made it particularly vulnerable to fraud and abuse."

Indeed, estimated losses as a result of irregularities from CAP payments increased from £77m in 1992 to £320m in 1994. The MPs call for "simplification and structural reform" of the CAP.

Payments under structural

funds – such as the social fund and the regional development fund – amount to £20bn per year and the Court of Auditors told MPs that around 5 per cent of the grant payments made to 31,000 separate projects contained "technical faults", averaging about 30 per cent of the value of the grant.

Another major source of fraud is the loss of VAT payable to the European Community, one of its major sources of income. The MPs say that VAT and customs duty on imports are payable only in the country of final destination but because of inadequate information systems and the general complexities of goods in transit crossing several national borders, an estimated £542m is lost annually.

The MPs are also bemused by the fact that the precise amount of the UK's net contribution to EU funds of around £1bn is not known because different figures are given by the Treasury and the Court of Auditors. The court thinks that this is because of the use of different financial years and the non-inclusion in the Treasury figures of amounts paid by the private sector. The MPs say that it should be possible to reconcile these differences and welcomes moves by the Treasury and the court to do so.

■ Committee of Public Accounts, *The Audit of European Community Transactions*, The Stationery Office, £5.10.

## Discipline code for Labour MPs

Frank Abrams  
Political Correspondent

Labour MPs could be disciplined for consistently criticising their party leaders under a new code of conduct which was approved yesterday.

The code, which creates a new offence of bringing the party into disrepute, was accepted by 86 votes to 27 despite protests from several left-wingers. It also asks members to attend Parliament regularly, to refrain from personal attacks on colleagues and to act "in harmony with" party policy.

However, the party's leadership accepted an amendment which said it would not be used to "stifle democratic debate on policy matters or weaken the spirit of tolerance and respect referred to in Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution."

Last night Tony Blair, the Labour leader, insisted that the move was not meant to prevent free and open discussion.

"What it is about is showing we are a serious, professional and disciplined organisation. Everyone understands that if you are serious about governing the country we'll have to be professional and disciplined. You only have to look at to-

day's Tories to understand that. They are a classic example of how a country should not be run," he said.

One senior Labour MP recently attacked Tony Blair in the left-wing *Tribune* newspaper under the byline "Cassandra." And three MPs who recently put their names to a petition organised by the Socialist Workers' Party, which condemned any attempt to weaken Labour's links with the trade unions, were not disciplined.

If Labour decided that one of its MPs had stepped out of line under the code, which comes into force in January, a vote of all its members would be taken before they were suspended from the parliamentary party.

A number of left-wingers were unhappy with the outcome last night. Dennis Canavan, MP for Falkirk West, said he had voted against the code. "It is wide open to subjective interpretation. I don't think it should have any place in a democratic socialist party," he said.

Ken Livingstone, MP for Brent East, also objected to the new code. "I think it is unbelievably crass to say we have to support the party even if it is wrong," he said.

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**THERE'S A GREAT DEAL GOING ON THIS CHRISTMAS**

After the blast: Travellers are warned to be vigilant as intelligence source links gas-canister attack to Islamic extremists

## 1,000 extra police guard Paris targets

Mary Dejevsky  
Paris

Paris was on high alert yesterday as anti-terrorist measures, familiar from last summer, came into force after the rush-hour bomb explosion on Tuesday at Port Royal station. An additional 1,000 police and gendarmes were drafted in to patrol potential targets and 700 troops were placed at the city's disposal.

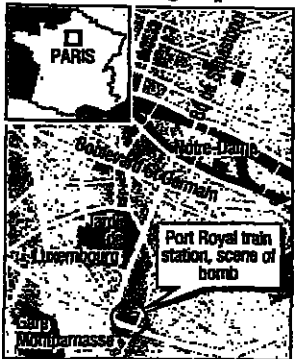
Two people were killed in the explosion and nearly 100 more were injured.

The most overt security was at stations and tourist sites such as the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre precinct, where gendarmes and CRS riot police patrolled in pairs. Security announcements were made through the day at underground stations, where passengers were banded small blue and white cards headed "Vigilant, together".

The impression was of a more discreet, but also more discriminating, security presence than last summer, and of a French public quietly returning to well-rehearsed routines. In such circumstances it seemed almost superfluous for a government spokesman to call for "calm and sang-froid". But ministers revelled in the opportunity to call for national solidarity with the government to combat terrorism and they had the gratifying spectacle of trade unions cancelling planned protests because of the attack.

Outside Paris, security was

increased in Bordeaux, where the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, is mayor, and in Lyons, which was a target during last summer's bomb campaign. Suburban housing estates known to have large concentrations of first- and second-generation north African immigrants and active Islamic groups were



Port Royal train station, scene of bomb attack

placed under special surveillance. There was additional security at airports and borders. Answering questions in the National Assembly, after a minute's silence for the victims of the bomb, Mr Juppé said no one had so far admitted responsibility and no one line of inquiry was being preferred.

The French news agency AFP, however, quoted "informed sources" - likely to be the intelligence service - as saying that a warning had been out since early November that a bombing campaign could be expected.

They cited an Islamic

newsletter from September and a separate tip-off that a commando unit was about to enter France from Italy after training in the Middle East.

The type of bomb - a 13kg gas canister filled with explosives and 10cm nails which was said by experts to have caused as much damage as a grenade - and the timing and location of the attack had immediately recalled last year's campaign by Algerian Islamic terrorists.

Despite these parallels, the foreign ministry spokesman, Jacques Rummelhardt, said that there was so far "nothing to link the attack with the situation in Algeria... we are still at the stage of hypotheses". Some observers connected the bomb with last weekend's referendum in Algeria which had supported a new constitution outlawing religious parties.

Others noted, however, that France's first big terrorist trial of recent years is due to open in Paris on Monday. The case concerns the bombing of a hotel in Marrakesh in Morocco in 1994.

Two French citizens of north African origin are in prison in Morocco after being convicted of the attack, but the inquiry also uncovered a recruiting network based in France.

The case provided the first evidence of Islamic fundamentalist recruitment on French housing estates - a pattern repeatedly uncovered during the investigation into last year's bombings in France.



Security alert: French soldiers patrolling Eurostar trains near the Gare du Nord  
Photograph: AFP

## Chirac struggles to revive lost influence in Africa

Mary Dejevsky

It may have seemed that President Jacques Chirac, who flew out of Paris yesterday to reach Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso in time for the inaugural dinner of the Francophone African summit, was exchanging one trouble spot for another. From a capital beset by further terrorist attacks, he was arriving at an assembly of leaders from more than 50 African countries, several of which, notably Zaire and the Central African Republic, face the prospect of much worse disorders.

The summit was likely to be overshadowed, however, by a question that has been raised recently to France's great dis-

pleasure. Is France as the colonial power still able to propose and dispose in its traditional zones of influence?

Two developments have placed the question on the agenda. The first was its failure, despite a concerted diplomatic effort and statements about the "biggest humanitarian crisis ever", to master an international force to intervene in the Rwanda-Zaire border area. Half the crisis seemed to be solved when several hundred thousand Rwandan refugees walked back to their home country. By this week, the 10,000-strong force proposed had been reduced to plans for a food and medicine parachute drop in eastern Zaire. Even that may not happen.

The second development was no easier for France to swallow: the public vaulting of its weakness by the United States. The US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, had already infuriated France by challenging its "monopoly" on relations with some African countries. But the knife was turned last week by the US ambassador to Zaire, who gave a briefing to local journalists that then appeared verbatim in a Kinshasa newspaper. The ambassador, Daniel Simpson, was quoted as saying that France was "no longer capable of imposing its will in Africa" and that it continued to support "decadent" regimes. "The Cold War is over and it is no longer a matter of supporting a dictator."

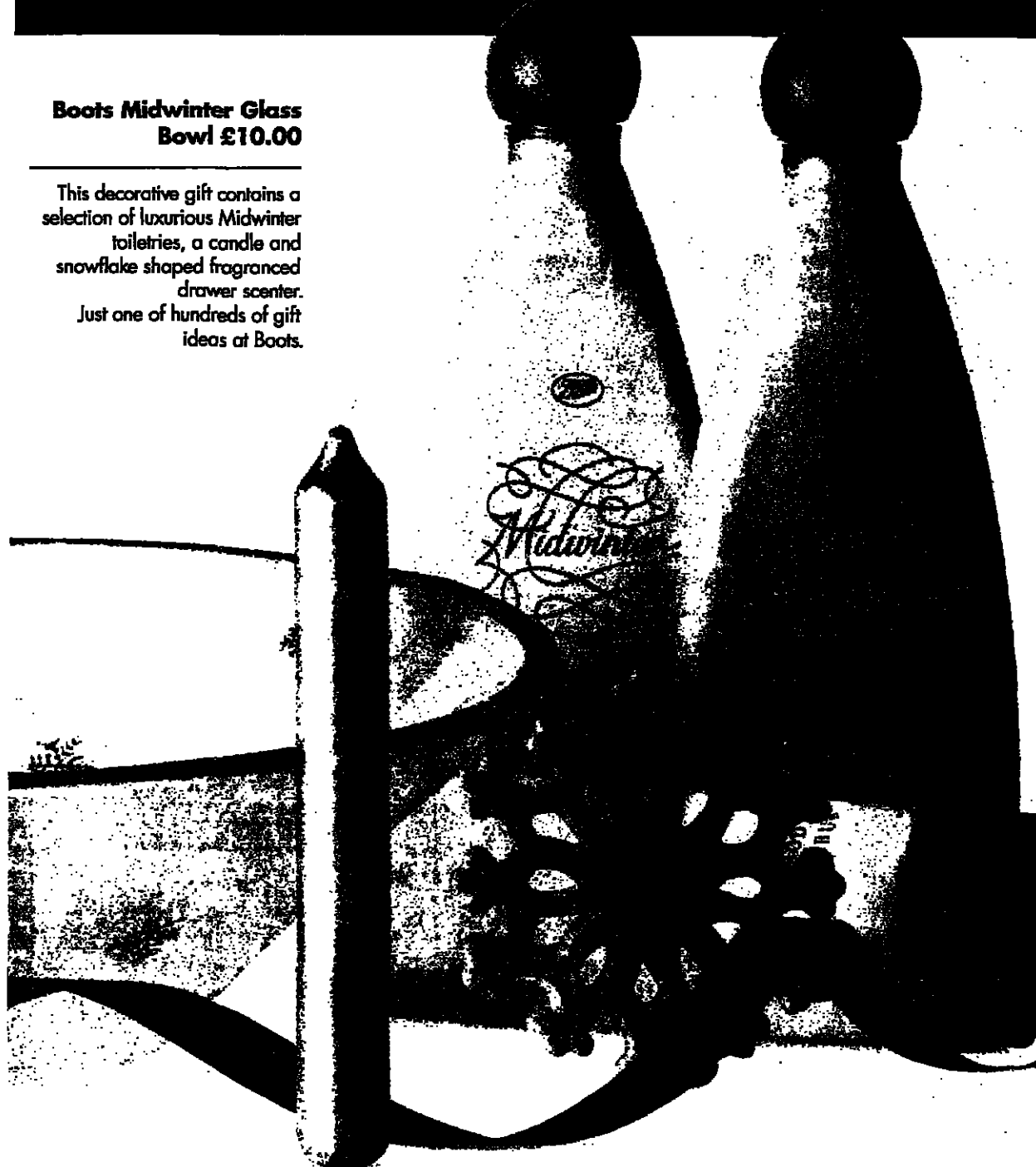
just because they are pro-Western," he said. French officials extracted an apology, but the damage was done. In fact, the sentiments attributed to the ambassador have been voiced by French specialists on Africa.

To counter the notion that his country protects corrupt dictators, Mr Chirac will argue in Ouagadougou for "good governance" in Africa, representing a shift from the emphasis on patronage towards a British-style model of aid tied to economic efficiency and political soundness. The message could be undermined, though, by the refugee accord by France to President Mobutu of Zaire, who is convalescing on the Riviera from a cancer operation.

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## Stronger lira casts a cloud over sunny side of the Alps

The dash for the euro is bringing gloom to South Tyrol. Sarah Helm reports

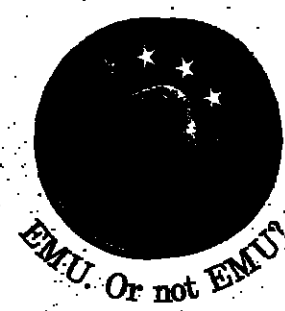
Bolzano - "There are two sides to this coin," says Richard Seebacher, swivelling in his chair to admire the Rosengarten peak through the window of the Casa di Risparmio bank.

"For Italian importers, a strong lira in the single currency should be good. But for exporters it is very alarming. We produce 11 per cent of Europe's apples here," he said, turning back to flick through his desk-top news monitor. "Prodi's Euro tax debate," says a headline.

In a warehouse across town, new machines are stamping EU-approved sell-by date stickers on packs of prize golden-delicious apples which will be trucked up the Brenner Pass, on through Germany, to the shelves of a Liverpool supermarket. Due to Rome's decision to bring the lira into the exchange-rate mechanism, the producers will get far less for their load than in previous years.

Nervousness about the strengthening lira is evident throughout South Tyrol.

At the parliament of the provincial government, in Bolzano, deputies met last week in solemn mood. They were discussing whether they could raise new taxes to run their bountiful, quasi city-state, in the manner to which the citizens have become accustomed.



"There are many people here who are not happy about trying to force Italy into the EMU first wave," said Mr Seebacher. "And I don't believe we will make it." The conventional wisdom says that, given the chaos of its national politics, Italy has become wholeheartedly pro-European. As a founder member of the community, the government of Romano Prodi, the Prime Minister, believes Italy has a right to membership of EMU from the start.

In reality, Italy, like other countries, is confused about the sense of the headlong drive for the single currency. And once again, Europe's "citizens" here know their anxieties are not being heard in Brussels. South

Tyrol is untypical of Italy; the area was part of Austria-Hungary until the end of the First World War. The concerns here do, however, reflect many ordinary Italian misgivings about the euro, magnified by proximity to the frontier. South Tyrol is in many respects very pro-European, being in the prosperous north. The vine-draped mountains, and the constant aroma of fresh coffee normally heightens the feel-good factor here. Bolzano is "on the sunny side of the Alps".

But the region's economy is heavily reliant on tourism, with 70 per cent of visitors coming from Germany. A downturn has already been noticed this year as the lira has strengthened.

The region's native German-speaking population has a strong historical interest in cementing ties with Austria and Bavaria, seeing European integration as a way to blur state boundaries. The South Tyrolese have won autonomy from Rome, as well as large subsidies.

However, precisely because South Tyrol has prospered under its autonomous government it resents what it sees as a "political" diktat from Rome over belt-tightening for the sin-

gle currency. Those driving the euro bandwagon in Bonn and Paris scorn countries who engage in "competitive devaluation". But in Bolzano the freedom to weaken the lira is seen as a valuable tool. It has meant a mini-boom for South Tyrol. Some here fear that anger over Mr Prodi's cuts, to prepare Italy for the euro, could upset the fragile local political balance between the dominant German speakers and the minority Italian parties.

New economic hardship is likely to hit South Tyrol's less privileged ethnic Italians first, and extreme right Italian nationalist politicians here are exploiting popular discontent. "People hate the Euro-tax. They are angry that a reduction in employment and cuts in state social spending is the price we are having to pay for the euro," said Luigi Schiatti, of the post-Fascist Unitalia political party.

The South Tyrolese value their regional identity, and this makes them doubly nervous about Brussels-style European integration. There is a fear about the "harmonisation" of cultures that the introduction of the euro could bring. "Integration is a word we don't like very much," says Richard Seebacher. "People are afraid it means they will lose their identity."

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# Milosevic stays cool as protests jam Belgrade

**Democracy call: A Belgrade student waving a copy of *Demokratija* at the Serbian presidency building during a peaceful rally in the city yesterday** Photograph: AP

The Czech President, Vaclav Havel, who had half a lung with a cancerous tumour removed, is recuperating well. *Reuter - Prague*

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## international

## Bonn's top spy defies critics

Imre Karacs  
Bonn

Number 008 did not look comfortable in his unaccustomed role as public servant. Standing before the German parliament to answer questions about a mission gone wrong, Bernd Schmidbauer, controller of secret services, concentrated on damage limitation.

No, Werner Mauss, the "private agent" arrested in Colombia last month for paying ransom to kidnappers, had not acted under orders. Yes, it was true he had met Mr Mauss six times in three months, and knew of his "humanitarian mission". Chancellor Helmut Kohl, in whose office Mr Schmidbauer - codename 008 - works, was aware of the Mauss escapade only in "general terms".

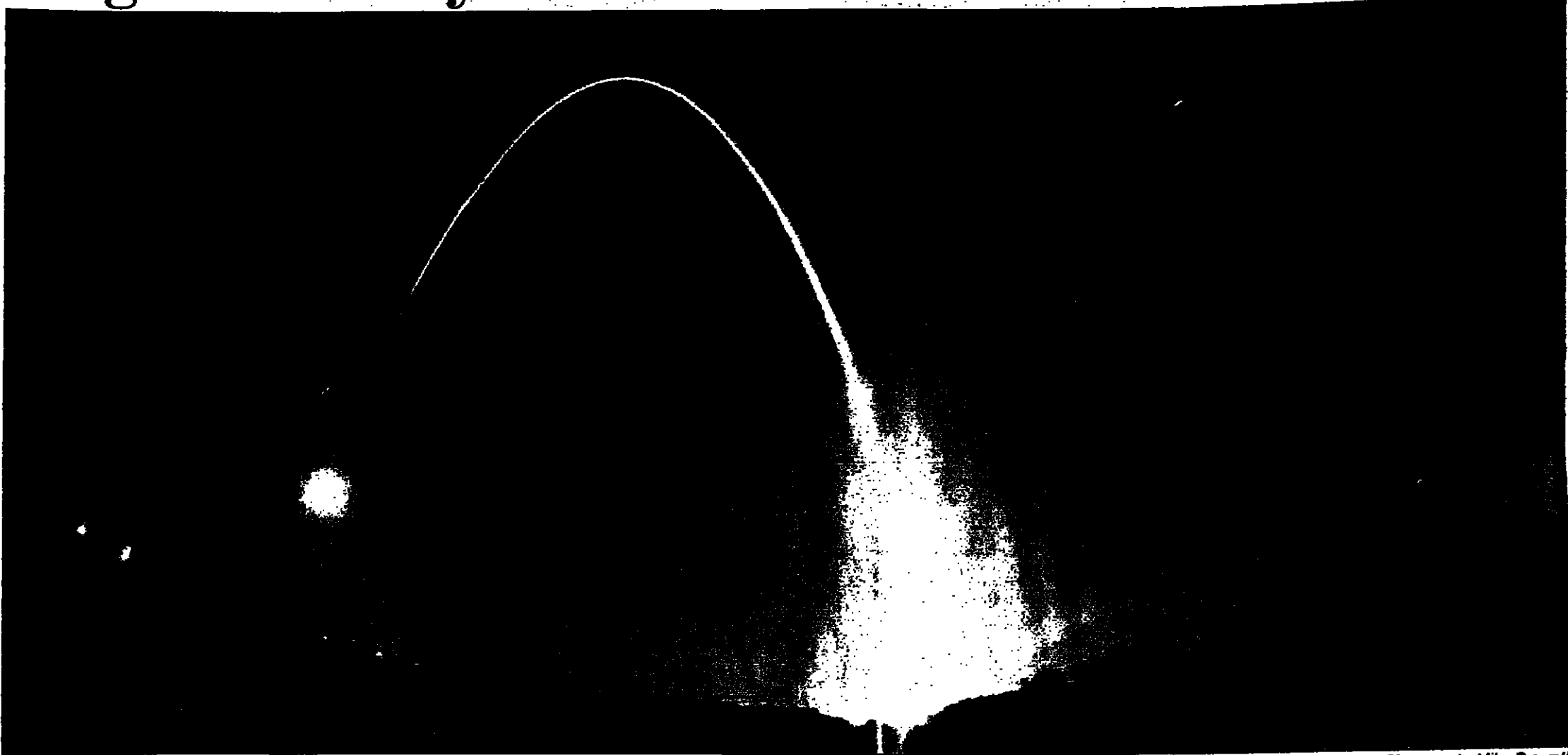
Apart from that, the government knew nothing of Mr Mauss's activities. It had merely issued two German passports to "Mr and Mrs Möllner", which were then handed over to Mr and Mrs Mauss, together with a letter from the consulate in Bogotá certifying that the holders were on official business. The gun the agent was carrying as he was apprehended in Medellín on 17 November was apparently his own, as was the satellite phone and four forged passports.

Mr Mauss had been paid by German companies to negotiate the release of senior staff kidnapped in Colombia. On his last outing, he was about to fly the wife of a BASF executive out of the country, having just bought her freedom for a sum in the region of \$2m. Paying ransom is a crime in Colombia, as is travelling with false papers - the charges upon which he was indicted yesterday.

The affair has provoked opposition calls for Mr Schmidbauer's resignation. But the man who once ordered plutonium to be smuggled into Germany will not be dislodged by the capture of just one of his private army.

"I expect no gratitude," he told MPs, "but nor do I expect to be judged."

## Signs in the sky mark another mission to the red planet



Trail-blazer: A time-exposure photograph shows a Delta rocket lifting off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, yesterday, carrying a Nasa Mars Pathfinder probe

Photograph: Mike Brown/AA

## Chechens welcome their Robin Hood

## Phil Reeves meets the aspiring president, Moscow's bête noire

Grozny - Shamil Basayev and his entourage of rifle-wielding fighters had no sooner clambered out of his dusty Nissan Patrol than he was quoting his version of Churchill with all the fluency of a man who had spent a lifetime on the stump.

Perhaps we could remember Churchill's three rules about Russia, said the Chechen commander, who now - to the horror of his enemies in Moscow - wants to be president of the self-proclaimed Caucasus republic. "First, don't believe the Russians. Secondly, never make friends with the Russians, and thirdly, never let a Russian into your cowshed."

Six months ago such rhetoric

was only to be expected from Mr Basayev, 31, the most uncompromising of the Chechen separatist leaders, whose exploits in the war made him a latter-day Robin Hood for many of his countrymen but a terrorist in the eyes of Russia.

Diplomacy was never his style. His CV includes robbing banks, hijacking, storming a fortress city (Grozny) and - his most notorious exploit - rounding up 1,000 hostages in Budennovsk, Russia, last year.

But the 21-month Chechen

war is over. The Russians say all their troops will have left by the end of next month. They leave behind a wrecked and bewildered territory that Mr Basayev seeks to lead not as a soldier but as a statesman. "I want to improve society," he says simply when asked why.

But his decision is also the political equivalent of a two-fingered salute to his enemies. No one is more aware than he that his candidacy will infuriate Moscow, rekindling anger over a peace deal many regard as a

capitulation to Chechen demands to secede. This indignation will be greater still when they contemplate his election manifesto: the priority of the man who was for so long Russia's most wanted terrorist will be to fight crime.

It is an issue that has begun to matter after a war that was itself a monstrous crime, claiming 100,000 lives. Fighters, still in uniform, race down the highway in BMWs without number plates, yet the euphoria brought by the spoils of success has given way to distrust and resentment. "They have all become so arrogant," said an academic who used to support the former separatist leader Dzhokhar Du-

dayev. "Before, they seemed such idealists. Now it's everyone for himself. They say, 'We fought for independence for two years. Now we want our salaries'. So they take them." The worst manifestation of this is kidnappings, often by Chechens seeking to settle wartime scores by demanding ransoms of \$50,000 (£33,000) or more. Although some of those who worked with the previous Moscow-backed regime are in the coalition government, many are not; some are too frightened to leave their homes for fear of abduction. "Savagery," said Mr Basayev. "We have to fight these types of offences with all our might."

But what about his own mass kidnapping in Budennovsk, in which more than 100 Russians died? His eyes smoulder. "It was my fate. It helped force a peace settlement. Look at what we have now, and ... then. An end to the genocide of the Chechen people. A troop pull-out. A solution to our problems at the negotiating table."

He has a point. A year, even six months ago, few would have foreseen that he would have been outlining his presidential

ambitions to journalists in the centre of Grozny, in the courtyard, no less, of the building that used to house his sworn enemies, the Russian Federal Security Services.

Over the road stood the building occupied by the silk-suited courtiers of Doku Zavgayev, the Russians' ousted puppet leader, now in Moscow. The Chechen seizure of Grozny left it a wreck, ornamented only by warnings about mines and a scrawled remark: "Born wolves [the Chechen national

emblem] cannot be made to bark like lapdogs."

Such rhetoric will become the campaign theme of the Mr Basayev, whose poster adorns many Chechen homes and is on display at Grozny's railway station. His rivals in next month's elections are older men who have shown willingness to co-operate with Russia: the leader of the coalition government, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, and the Prime Minister, Aslan Maskhadov. They played key roles in the talks that led to a deal to postpone a decision on Chechnya's status for five years, troop withdrawal and as yet unclear commitments over economic co-operation, notably oil.

But Mr Basayev remained mostly aloof, defiant even. The merest suggestion that Moscow would be unable to accept him as president produces a sneer. "Of course it will be hard for them to work with me. I won't let them rob Chechnya. I will make sure all agreements ... are, first and foremost, in the interests of Chechens. Fighting talk, the sort that will cause many to rally to his cause. The sort also to make Russia wonder what on earth it has done."



Basayev: Branded a terrorist

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## Clerics keep watch for the hour of death

Algiers - There were 36 monks and nuns at the Mass, most of them French, grey- or white-haired, listening beneath the stained-glass windows to their priest's reading from St Matthew, Chapter 25, verse 13, his words echoing through the little chapel in the Algiers suburb of Hydra.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." No one moved on the hard wooden seats. Beside the altar, the bespectacled figure of Monsigneur Henri Teissier, Archbishop of Algiers, sat like a statue in his white and purple robes. In every sense of the word, the silence was deadly.

They had come here, these brave 36, to remember one of France's first religious martyrs in Algeria, Vicomte Charles de Foucauld, the French soldier-turned-priest assassinated by an Islamist at Tamranasset in 1916. His murder set an awful precedent for the monks and nuns who still refuse to leave the land they call home. Of the 118 foreigners murdered here, 19 were priests or sisters of the Christian church. The French government long ago told the 8,000 remaining French citizens in Algeria to leave, but you have to admire the courage of the 300 or so clerics - from Latin America, Asia and the Middle East as well as France - who refused.

"I'm not afraid for me, but for our community," the Archbishop says later - a 67-year-old French professor of Arabic who took Algerian nationality after independence.

"You can imagine what I feel every time I hear the phone ring late at night or when I've left my number while visiting a friend's

house." On 21 May, the phone rang to tell him that all seven monks kidnapped from the monastery of Tibhirine, high in the mountains outside Algiers, had been found decapitated. He speaks softly when he describes what was found afterwards on the road between Algiers and Medea.

"It is true that we found only their heads," he says. "Three of their heads were hanging from a tree near a petrol station. The other four heads were lying on the grass beneath. But it is marvellous that the families of those monks maintained their friendship for us and for all Algerians. They had visited the monastery. They had been able to accept the loss of their sons. They knew it was not all Algerians who did this thing."

A unit of the Islamic Armed Group, led by a man named Sayah Attia, had cut their throats; one of the kidnapped priests had recognised him - when he opened the door of the monastery to the kidnappers two months earlier - from a newspaper photograph that identified Attia as the murderer of 12 Croats whose throats were slashed near the monastery in December, 1995.

Could the Archbishop understand what happened in the mind of the priests' killers at the moment they took up their knives? "They will kill a boy of two or an old man of 85. I think they are out of their consciences. They work under their understanding of Islamic law - 'we have to kill the enemies of the

Lord' - and it is finished ... ourselves are not in the same position as we were before this. When you begin celebrating the Eucharist, you cannot be remembering that Jesus was murdered by human violence - and in the name of religion. Now we have to understand the risk in this society, that we are walking in the footsteps of Jesus. We cannot look at the cross or Jesus as we have done before. Before, it was an abstract thing. Now it is a daily reality."

The Archbishop insists that his church, having long abandoned the idea of conversion, is now a church for Muslims. "We have become more and more the church of the Muslim people. The Algerians are Muslims but we are their church. We pray for them to try to help them."

The seven monks at Tibhirine opened their doors to all who needed help or medical aid, be they the poor of the mountains, even the GIA itself. "Islamists" are blamed for the deaths of most of the priests and nuns but no one is certain who killed the Bishop of Oran, Mgr Pierre Claverie, on 1 August this year, the day he met the French foreign minister, Hervé de Charette.

Mr Teissier, who was Bishop of Oran for nine years, believes Claverie was targeted much earlier. "The bomb went off in the street. He was crushed by the door of the chapel and his brains were found on the chapel floor. It was absurd, idiotic, unconscionable." Just for a moment, there is a hint of anger in the Archbishop's voice. He was in France the night Claverie was killed, with the family of one of the dead monks of Tibhirine, knowing neither the day nor the hour.

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## Arafat's men try to hush up jail death

Patrick Cockburn  
Jericho

At midnight, Palestinian special police came to the house of Suhailah Fityani in Jericho and told her that her son was dead. A few hours before, Rashid Fityani, held without trial for nearly two years in the local prison, where he was repeatedly tortured, had been killed by a guard during a scuffle.

At first the police story was that Fityani, 26, had tried to escape. Later, a police official said he was working outside his cell when he got into an argument, which turned into a fist fight, and finally a guard, whom he had beaten up, shot him dead. It did not seem very likely. Fityani was the second member of a group of six men from Jericho, one of the Palestinian autonomous areas, to die in the town's central prison after they

45, and four other men. The Preventive Security believed they were Israeli collaborators involved in the killing of an Islamic militant in a refugee camp outside Jericho. In testimony published by Amnesty, Fityani told his family he and Jalaytah were tortured in the same room for three days.

Both were allegedly given electric shocks and beaten with cables. Their flesh was pinched with pliers. They were given nothing to eat or drink for three days, at the end of which Jalaytah died. His body was taken to Jericho hospital; his family saw he was bruised but no autopsy report was published. Fityani was given half a cup of tea and a bowl of porridge a week after being arrested.

The police in Jericho did not show much confidence that their story of how Fityani died would stand up to much investigation. Issam Jalaita, the guard who shot the prisoner, either in self-defence or as he tried to escape, according to officials, had been arrested and was in jail. At the hospital there was an armed police guard preventing anybody seeing the Fityani's body and another outside the house of his mother, Suhailah. He refused to let anybody enter, citing "orders", though he refused to say from whom. A member of Preventive Security told journalists gathering outside the house that "the family does not want to talk to you. Please leave".

At this point, a window in the green door behind the Preventive Security man flew open and Suhailah Fityani, a diminutive woman of about 60, in traditional Palestinian embroidered dress, shouted: "Why won't you let me talk to the press? My son was in a jail without trial for two years and then they killed him!" As a security man forced Mrs Fityani away from the door she screamed: "Get your hand off me or I'll break it. I want to talk."

More police arrived and tried unsuccessfully to disperse the small crowd of journalists. After half an hour the green door was opened again, this time by a Preventive Security agent, who smirked as he ushered forward Mrs Fityani. In a chastened voice she said: "I want you all to go away. Nothing you do can give me back my son. He died a supporter of Abu Amar [Yasser Arafat]."

Both were ...  
beaten with  
cables. Their  
flesh was  
pinched  
with pliers.

were arrested on the same day last year, accused of collaborating with Israel.

His death confirms the reputation of the Palestinian Authority, led by Yasser Arafat, for ill-treating prisoners held by its 11 different police and security forces. At least nine other people have died as a result of torture in the past two years, according to an Amnesty report this week. "It is terrible, a dark day for Palestinian society and fully confirming what Amnesty says about systematic torture," said Bassem Eid, of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, yesterday.

Fityani differs from the other 2,000 Palestinians arrested and held without trial by the Palestinian Authority in that the last two years of his life can be fully documented. He was arrested early on 15 January 1995 by men from the Preventive Security Service, the largest Palestinian secret-police agency.

Detained with him was his brother-in-law, Salman Jalaytah,

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IN0512



Free to wed: Nina Baehr (left) and Genora Dancel, who successfully sued the state of Hawaii for denying marriage licences to homosexual couples  
Photograph: AP

## Gay weddings land Hawaii in a storm

David Usborne  
New York

A ruling by a court in Hawaii that bars the state from denying marriage licences to homosexuals is promising a new tourist boom to the Pacific islands, while reigniting intense political debate across the United States over the civil rights of gays and the definition of marriage.

In his long-awaited ruling delivered late on Tuesday, Circuit Judge Kevin Chang found the state of Hawaii was in violation of sexual discrimination provisions in its own constitution by withholding marriage licences from lesbians and gays.

Judge Chang ruled the state had failed to demonstrate a "compelling interest" as to why gays ought not be allowed to marry. The state had attempted to argue that allowing gay marriage in Hawaii might harm the welfare of any children homosexual couples tried to raise.

The decision is a milestone for supporters of gay marriage and for the three homosexual couples who first introduced the case five years ago. One of the plaintiffs, Nina Baehr, told reporters: "People told us we would never get this far in the courts, but when we heard the news there were tears in my eyes. I thought I would cry if we lost, but we cried for winning".

For conservative critics it will provide a fresh rallying cry for renewed efforts to block what they see as a conspiracy by gay activists to subvert marriage. Robert Knight of the Family Research Council called the ruling an "outrage".

The holding of gay marriages in Hawaii may be delayed, however, as the state considers appealing to the State Supreme Court. Such an appeal, which is highly likely, could take most of next year to complete.

It is doubtful that the Supreme Court, which gave a

provisional ruling in favour of gay marriage in the same case in 1993, would overturn Tuesday's ruling. In that case, it is probable that Hawaii would finally begin to issue marriage licences to gays and lesbians before the end of next year.

For Hawaii, it is likely to mean a flood of gays to the islands seeking to realise their dreams of marriage.

The political and legal battle that is already under way is focused on the implications of the ruling for the rest of the Union. In theory, the "full faith and credit" provisions of the US Constitution obliges every state to recognise the laws of others.

Last September, however, President Bill Clinton, with the election looming, signed the "Defense of Marriage Act" that invites states to refuse to recognise gay couples and serves to deny gays financial benefits extended to heterosexual married couples.

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The Economist



## obituaries / gazette

## Sir Claude Hayes

Claude Hayes was a distinguished civil servant whose career ended in 1974 in a blaze of adverse publicity as the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations, of which he was Chairman, plunged towards a bankruptcy only averted by a massive injection of government funds.

Hayes, the son of a Sussex village carpenter, confounded local belief in the 1920s by gaining a scholarship to advance him from village primary to Ardington College to a First at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, followed by a fellowship at the Sorbonne. He returned to Oxford in 1938 briefly as a tutor at New College, before being called up on the outbreak of the Second World War.

Commissioned into the Royal Army Service Corps, he saw service in France with the British Expeditionary Force, and thereafter in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and North-West Europe: from 1942 to 1945 as Lieutenant-Colonel, with a mention in dispatches.

On demobilisation he joined the Civil Service Commission, becoming Director of Examinations and Commissioner in 1949. He transferred to the Treasury in 1957, ultimately as Under-Secretary responsible for Overseas Expenditure, with particular reference to the emergence of major colonies to independence.

By this time Hayes, always an avid traveller, had seen a great deal of the world. Army service apart, he had secured two travelling scholarships or fellowships pre-war, and in 1953-54 a Nuffield Foundation Fellowship had enabled him to tour widely throughout the Commonwealth. His appointment as financial adviser to R.A. Butler, on the break-up of the Central African Federation and Rhodesia independence, added yet further to the overseas background which from then on governed his career.

In 1964-65 the Wilson government established the Ministry of Overseas Development – an innovation viewed with some apprehension by the Treasury and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, for two reasons: first because each foresaw some encroachment on its

own preserves and second, because they had qualms about the formidable pairing of the new Minister and Permanent Secretary – Barbara Castle and the late Sir Andrew Cohen. They saw, in the Elephant and Castle, as they were known, a blend of political exuberance and intellectual impetuosity that might upset the established order. They deemed it essential that a strong, scrupulous, no-nonsense Principal Finance Officer be added to the duo, and in Hayes they had by background and character the ideal choice.

So it proved. The frenetic Cohen and laconic Hayes worked well together. New initiatives in the management of the aid programme, conceived at the top then anchored to reality by



Hayes: calamitous error

Hayes and his staff, met with success. Because the ministry was new, so were many of the staff, particularly those serving overseas. Hayes drove them hard as he drove himself; he gave them his trust and absolute support, and expected – and got – loyalty and trust in return.

Aid philosophy was not his forte. His interests focused on the practicalities of aid – its effectiveness, and value to donor and recipient alike. He sought closer links with the private sector in the provision of goods and services – an issue of increasing importance as colony after colony moved to independence and hence freedom from direction. Throughout, as ever, Hayes travelled widely; he had to see for himself.

In 1968 the post of Chairman of the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations fell vacant. This curious organisation was neither

a body corporate nor part of the Civil Service. Lawyers described it as "an emanation of the Crown". The Minister of Overseas Development appointed the Chairman but had no control over his activities. Nor, indeed, had anyone else. The Chairman was however, generally responsible to the Minister for the efficient running of this office.

The staff numbered some 1,600 with headquarters in London and offices abroad. They operated through seven directorates and 10 departments, reflecting the diversity of their work – basically the supply of goods and services to the colonies. With the advent of colonial independence, that base had to be broadened if the Crown Agents were to survive, and to that end the Finance Directorate had set out in 1967 to offer a wider range of financial services, including own-account activities embracing merchant banking operations, equity participations and property ownership. In none of these fields was any member of the staff involved an expert.

Hayes was offered and accepted the chairmanship. He knew something of the Crown Agents' work, as liaison officer between them and the Ministry, and from his travels. He was aware of the burgeoning own-account activities but not of their extent. He sensed a need for the recruitment of a senior figure from the City to head the Directorate, citing his own lack of relevant knowledge and experience. However, he accepted assurances about the calibre of the director in situ – until it was far too late.

By the end of 1970, the Finance Directorate, living dangerously, was in effect operating as a high-risk bank, with over £400m wrapped up in loans and properties, world-wide. Then came the crash. By 1974, major loans worthless and the property market in tatters, the Crown Agents faced bankruptcy.

The Government stepped in, provided a rescue package of £175m and commissioned an inquiry into the causes of this huge disaster. The resultant report, 200 pages long and two years in the making, reads today like some preview of the collapse of Barings' bank. For in a widely critical assessment of what went

wrong, the commission identified rogue traders in the Finance Directorate as central to the debacle, their lack of expertise and firm control contributory factors. The commission added a rider to the effect that what went wrong was a part only of the Crown Agents' activities, themselves only part of their total business, otherwise well conducted through a devoted and loyal staff. It was the actions of just a few individuals that had brought catastrophe for all.

But Hayes sought no excuses. He publicly acknowledged his responsibility for all actions of the Crown Agents and refused to shift the blame for financial disaster. This was the year that saw his retirement.

Hayes the official was not always an easy colleague, always a combative opponent. Strong-willed, quick-thinking, a touch autocratic, he was never other than fair, straightforward and supportive of his staff. Herein, paradoxically, lay perhaps both his strength and his weakness: for once assured of a subordinate's loyalty and integrity he gave his trust, and expected like return. But such assurance is self-assessed, and in the case of the Finance Directorate, proved wholly misplaced. And the price of his error was calamitous.

Hayes in private was a generous, unassuming, dryly humorous man, deeply devoted to his family, his home and his garden. The pride of his retiring years was his listed medieval hall home, Prinkham, in Kent, which he and his wife had meticulously restored and furnished throughout a decade. Their joint talents were great; so was this achievement.

William Bell

*Claude James Hayes, civil servant born West Hoo, Essex 23 March 1912; Deputy Director of Examinations, Civil Service Commission, 1945-49; Director and Commissioner 1949-57; Secretary 1957-59; Assistant Secretary, HM Treasury 1957-64; Under-Secretary 1964-65; Principal Finance Officer, Ministry of Overseas Development 1965-68; Chairman, Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations 1968-74; CMG 1969, KCMG 1974; married 1940 Joan Pitt (died 1984; two sons, one daughter); died 20 November 1996.*

## Dr Hugh L'Etang

Because Hugh L'Etang was such a modest, understated individual, it would be easy to underestimate his contribution to medical publishing. He was the editor of the *Practitioner* from 1973 to 1982, a monthly journal for General Practitioners. The *Practitioner* was at the height of its success, and for much of the time was the only GP journal doctors would subscribe to. For a further eight years L'Etang was consultant editor of the *Physician* and from 1986 to this year editor of *Travel Medicine International*.

L'Etang was encouraged to enter medicine by his father. But he was a doctor who preferred to observe rather than to practise, and he did it with a glint in his eyes. He was the best medical copy editor I have ever encountered – precise and totally accurate. He wrote many acclaimed books. He was interested in the effect illness had on world leaders and this resulted in titles including *The Pathology of Leadership* (1969), *Fit to Lead?* (1980) and *Ailing Leaders in Power 1914-94* (1995).

Although L'Etang was in

many respects the quintessential English gentleman, his roots lay outside Britain. His father, Joseph L'Etang, came from Mauritius in the early 1900s to study medicine and stayed on to become a family doctor in London, where he met Frances Maas, whose family was involved in the tobacco business, and they married in 1915.

L'Etang was educated at Harefield, and won a scholarship to read Physiology at St John's College, Oxford. He completed his training at St Bartholomew's Hospital, for whom he also played rugby. During the Second World War he served with the Royal Army Medical Corps, and was twice mentioned in dispatches. After joining his father in general practice, he was a medical officer with North Thames Gas Board, and then with British European Airways. He became head of the medical department at the pharmaceutical company John Wyeth and Bros in 1958.

L'Etang was a voracious reader, and might have followed a literary career. One of his responsibilities at Wyeth was the

writing of advertising copy. He would visit the company's library to research well-known artists suffering from a condition that one of the company's drugs was attempting to treat. A career in medical publishing seemed attractive and in 1969 L'Etang landed himself a job as assistant editor of the *Practitioner*, becoming editor four years later. My own debt to L'Etang is enormous. When nearly 12 years ago I set up my own under-capitalised medical publishing company, Mark Allen Publishing, a management buy-out from International Thomson Publishing, L'Etang, then consultant editor of the *Physician*, one of the two medical journals I acquired, told me he would work for me for nothing.

Several months later he approached me again: "Travel Medicine International is up for sale," he said, "and urgently needs a buyer. If you agree to buy it I will work for the publication as editor, free."

Hugh L'Etang's much-loved wife, Cecily Tucker, was a respected doctor in her own right. They were inseparable. She



L'Etang: glint in the eye

would accompany Hugh to meetings and help him report them. She was the cornerstone of his life.

Mark Allen

*Hugh Joseph Charles James L'Etang, medical practitioner and writer; born 23 November 1917; Medical Adviser, North Thames Gas Board 1945-56; British European Airways 1956-58; Medical Adviser, John Wyeth 1958-69; Assistant and Deputy Editor, the Practitioner 1969-73; Editor 1973-82; Consultant Editor, the Physician 1983-91; married 1951 Cecily Tucker (died 1996; one son, one daughter); died London 25 November 1996.*



Bastin, as Baron Ochs, with Helga Demesch in Der Rosenkavalier, 1974

Photograph: Hulton Getty

## Jules Bastin

During a career lasting 35 years, the Belgian bass Jules Bastin acquired an enviable reputation both as a comic singer and as a *basse chantante* in the best French tradition.

At Covent Garden he appeared only in the former category, as Baron Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier* and Balducci in *Benvenuto Cellini*, but his wide repertoire included such roles as Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*, Hagen in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and King Henry in *Lohengrin* and the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlos*, which he sang at the Paris Opéra, the Salzburg Festival, the Vienna State Opera, Brussels and Antwerp. However, his enormous figure, though it could be imposing in tragedy, was used to even greater effect in comedy, where his superb diction, especially in French, was also a major benefit.

Jules Bastin was born in Pont-Léveuve, near Verviers, and taught English and History at a grammar school in Brussels before beginning vocal studies with the tenor Frédéric Anschütz, a noted teacher. He also attended the Opera Studio at the Théâtre de la Monnaie, where he made his stage debut in 1960 as Caronte (Charon) in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*.

He appeared in Brussels, Liège, Charleroi and French provincial cities such as Rouen, singing *Zuniga* in *Carmen*, Brétigny in *Manon* and other minor roles. In 1972 he made his London debut as the Papal Treasurer, Balducci, in *Benvenuto Cellini* at a Prom concert in the Albert Hall, and Balducci became one of his favourite roles. He sang it at Covent Garden in January 1976, at La Scala with the Royal Opera that March, as well as in many other cities, including Buenos Aires, Lyons, Florence, and in

1995, in one of his last appearances, at the Rome Opera.

Meanwhile Bastin had made his Covent Garden debut in 1974 as Baron Ochs. This soon became another favourite role, which he recorded and sang in Rouen, Strasbourg, Amsterdam and Brussels. In 1975 he sang the Marquis de Calatrava in *La forza del destino* and the Hebrew Elder in *Sansone et Dalila* at the Paris Opéra, where in 1979 he took part in the first performance of the complete three-act version of *Lulu*, singing the Theatre director and the Banker. The same year he appeared at Aix-en-Provence, as Le Maître (the Magistrate) in *Werther* and Bartolo in *Le nozze di Figaro*.

A new era began at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels on 10 November 1981, when Gérard Mortier took over the direction of the theatre. Bastin sang the Grand Inquisitor in the opening production, *Don Carlos*, and was described as "a gigantic praying mantis". For the next 10 years he appeared there frequently, as Pandolfe in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Publius in *La clemenza di Tito*, the Badger and the Parson in Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen*, the Mayor in *Jenufa*, the Theatre Director and the Banker in *Lulu* and many other roles. He scored a tremendous hit in 1986 as Baron Zeta in *The Merry Widow*, staged at the Cirque Royale, which was then transported to Blossom Music Center in Ohio, where his Baron was judged "endearingly goofy".

His other comic roles included Colonel Frank in *Die Fledermaus*, the Vicary in *La Pêrèche*, both of which he sang in Strasbourg; Agamemnon in *La Belle Hélène* in 1983 at Geneva, where he "added to his already healthy girth with a

huge rubber ring" in the bathing scene in the third act. The same year he offered a notably drunken Varlaam in *Boris Godunov* at Avignon, and appeared as Pluto, Jupiter and Neptune in Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* in Aix. The Astrologer Sirocco in Chabrier's *L'Étoile* at the Opéra Comique in 1984 provided him with another enjoyable role, which he repeated at the Edinburgh Festival the following year, "in his most splendidly rotund form".

Bastin appeared several times in North America: in 1977 at Toronto he sang Sulpice in Donizetti's *La fille du régiment*, while in Philadelphia he sang Le Bailly in *Werther* (1984), a "roguish" Varlaam (1987) and "a deftly humorous" Gamekeeper in Dvorák's *Rusalka* (1988). Having already sung the King of Clubs in *Love for Three Oranges* at Geneva in 1984, he scored one of the greatest triumphs of his career as Cleonte, the giant Cook with a penchant for pretty ribbons, at Aix in 1989. He also recorded this role.

Jules Bastin continued singing into the 1990s, appearing as Mozart's Bartolo at Glyndebourne and as Geronte in *Manon Lescaut* at Paris-Bastille in 1991. On 31 December that year he sang Bartolo in Brussels at the last performance of the Mortier regime at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. In 1993 he took part in the first performance of Debussy's unfinished *Rodrigue et Clémence* at the newly rebuilt Lyons Opera House and, his career coming full circle, sang the role of his debut, Caronte in *Orfeo*, at Salzburg.

*Jules Armand Bastin, opera singer; born Pont-Léveuve, Belgium 18 March 1933; died Brussels 2 December 1996.*

## Barry Prothero

Barry Prothero was a committed fighter for gay liberation and an innovative curator, who helped set up and direct the Angel Row Gallery for Nottinghamshire County Council.

After university in his native Australia, Prothero worked in art galleries, which spurred him towards further study at Sydney University, where he specialised in the history of art. A brilliant student, he was awarded a government scholarship to attend the Warburg Institute in London, and in 1977 spent six months in Italy practising the language and studying art at first hand before moving to London. Excited by London's cultural and political atmosphere, Prothero found the atmosphere of the Warburg too conservative, and transferred to the more liberal Courtauld Institute, though his request to write about David Hockney was turned down on the grounds that "there was nothing to say". Later he threw himself into gay politics, and was an active member of the Gay Activist Alliance, taking part in campaigns to "zap" W.H. Smith's shops for their refusal to sell Gay News, and picketing British Home Stores for sackings a gay worker, Tony Whitehead.

In 1980 Prothero became the first gay rights officer at the National Council for Civil Liberties. Here he contributed to publications on employment rights and initiated campaigns to raise the issue of transsexuals, getting the case of April Ashley taken up by the European Court of Human Rights.

He then moved briefly to the Lesbian and Gay Centre, the branch of the Greater London Council, before returning to his first love as visual arts officer for Nottingham County Council and moving to Nottingham. Determined that the city should have a gallery devoted to contemporary work, he persuaded the council to set up the elegant and spacious Angel Row Gallery in a prime city-centre site. He devised a wide-ranging programme which included work by artists such as Alison Wilking and John Keane as well as exhibitions of fine crafts. A major success was to commission Helen Chadwick to cast her sculptural pieces *Piss Flowers* (1994) for a spectacular show which subsequently toured to the Serpentine Gallery in London. Prothero's confidence, knowledge and inter-personal skills calmed the anxieties of local councillors about work which carried an element of sensationalism. Among other thought-provoking exhibitions were installations by Susan Tranter and Duncan Higgins which were visual responses to coal mining, an industry which had dominated the area for nearly 200 years.

Two years ago increasing ill-health led Prothero to take early retirement and he returned to London. Earlier this year his long-time partner, Tim Lunn, died, leaving him bereft. Despite failing health (he died of an AIDS-related illness) he continued to pursue the interests which throughout his life had given him pleasure notably music, the visual arts and theatre.

Slight in stature, with chiselled features and curly black hair, Barry Prothero brought to his work not only Byronic good looks, but an intellectual rigour, a lively imagination and, most usefully, a wicked wit.

Emmanuel Cooper

*Barry Graeme Prothero, curator; born Perth, Australia 28 May 1945; died London 26 November 1996.*

Love t

back on road to an Pier

## Births, Marriages &amp; Deaths

## BIRTHS

**HUGHES:** On 26 November, to Angela and Mark, a beautiful daughter, Sophie Jane.

## DEATHS

**RICHTER-FENTNEY:** Dr Hugh, husband of Annabel, father of Christine, died on 2 December 1996, Cerebral Haemorrhage, aged 82, after a long illness. Buried at West Norwood Crematorium, London SE27, on Tuesday 10 December at midday. All welcome afterwards. Enquiries to The Funeral Centre, 0181-495 0990. No flowers, but donations to English National Opera Boy's Programme.

**Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS** may be telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at 50p a line (VAT extra).

**ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS**  
The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh carry out engagements in Manchester: The Duke of Edinburgh will be in the city on Wednesday 13 December, and will be accompanied by the Queen. The Duke of Edinburgh will be in the city on Thursday 14 December, and will be accompanied by the Queen. The Duke of Edinburgh will be in the city on Friday 15 December, and will be accompanied by the Queen. The Duke of Edinburgh will be in the city on Saturday 16 December, and will be accompanied by the Queen. The Duke of Edinburgh will be in the city on Sunday 17 December, and will be accompanied by the Queen. The Duke of Edinburgh will be in the city on Monday 18 December, and will be accompanied by the Queen. The Duke of Edinburgh will be in the city on Tuesday 19 December, and will be accompanied by the Queen. The Duke of Edinburgh will be in the city on Wednesday 20 December, and will be accompanied by the Queen. 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# Love thy neighbour is the lesson for Number 10

**M**emo to Tony Blair: do not let Gordon Brown gain any powerful allies in a Labour cabinet. This week has been an important lesson in the dynamics of modern British government. Kenneth Clarke won a crushing victory over the Prime Minister with the help of Michael Heseltine.

We have seen in the recent past how a Chancellor can overwhelm his next-door neighbour if the occupant of 10 Downing Street allows him to make alliances. Nigel Lawson did it to Margaret Thatcher in 1988, forcing her to declare that the pound would go into the European exchange rate mechanism "when the time is right". He and Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, ambushed her before the European summit in Madrid. Then John Major himself did it to her, in 1990, when she finally agreed to join the ERM - against what she thought was her better judgement. That time, Douglas Hurd, the Foreign Secretary, was the Chancellor's leverage partner.

It was Hugh Dalton, Labour's post-war Chancellor, who observed that the more free the traffic through the connecting door between Nos 10 and 11, the happier the government. When relations are poor, the government is weak; conversely, when relations are close and harmonious, governments tend to be strong. Labour would probably not have been able to come through the 1976 IMF crisis if Jim Callaghan and

Denis Healey had not worked well together. Geoffrey Howe's 1981 budget, based on the solid foundation of like minds, was the turning point of Mrs Thatcher's first administration.

Mr Major knows this already, of course, because it was his former ally Norman Lamont who threatened the unity of the Government with his scepticism about the ERM - such that he "sang in the bath" when the pound was bounced out of it. But now the connecting door between Downing Street neighbours seems firmly closed. Mr Major is already on record. His "instincts" are against a single European currency. Mr Clarke, likewise, is on record. There could be benefits in joining the euro and it would be "senseless" to rule it out. So they have worked out a compromise, which is to leave the option open. But it gets harder and harder to fudge a question of such central importance as the date draws nearer to the election - followed less than a year later by the deadline for a decision.

This week, it seems Mr Major wanted to send a signal to the Conservative Party that there was no question of his joining the single currency in the first wave, while keeping the option open in public and thus keeping his Chancellor. Whether someone overdid the whispering in the ear of *The Daily Telegraph*, or whether it was simply a crass and counter-productive idea, we cannot know. But the ferret, instead of flushing

out a rabbit, let loose a pair of wily old foxes, in the form of Mr Clarke and Mr Heseltine, who were given the chance bluntly to reassert the compromise position. Mr Major had no choice but to be uncharacteristically emphatic in his answers to the Labour leader in the Commons on Tuesday: his government will not rule out the option of joining the single currency, *not even in the election campaign*. That last bit in italics is important, so important that it might just be top of Labour's list for sentences to quote back at Conservatives when the campaign gets properly underway.

The silence on the Tory benches

marked a significant historical moment. For the Euro-sceptical mainstream, it dawned on them that Mr Major was not going to spring the "not in the next Parliament" surprise which they believe is essential to winning the next election. For the rest, it dawned that the unity on the issue, which they thought had been skillfully and convincingly put together at Bournemouth last month, was not going to last.

There now opens up the appalling prospect of the Tories imitating Labour in the 1983 election, with the party leadership and the membership going to the polls on rival programmes. The

manifesto will keep the option open, but as many as two-thirds of Tory candidates will tell their electors that they would never vote to "abolish the pound". Yesterday, as we report today, it emerged that this Euro-sceptical majority will include ministers who will have to be repudiated just as the election campaign gets under way.

The remarkable thing is that, unlike Labour in 1983, either programme could be popular. The electorate is broadly hostile to the single currency, but it also strongly supports the argument for keeping the option open. Few voters, however, are likely to look favourably on a party which tries to adopt both positions. And the problem for the Tories now is that they cannot help themselves.

Formally, the compromise position will now hold until the election. But with some ministers now describing their outlook as "suicidal", as a result of Tuesday's Prime Minister's Questions, discipline is dangerously close to breaking down. Westminster's corridors are abuzz with post-election Tory leadership talk again - the worst possible sign for the party's electoral optimism. Once again, so soon after an apparently successful party conference in October, we are back to speculating that the Tory party is sliding towards disaster, in the grip of an ideological conflict which it is incapable of resolving while still in power.

Of course, in 1983 the Tories won a 144-seat majority over a divided

Labour Party. Mr Blair's new Labour is not going to win a landslide of that size, is it? Most chilling of all for the Tories this week was the ICM poll, which put them on 31 per cent, behind Labour on 50 per cent. That is the polling company - the Tories' own, in fact - which is most cheerful about the Tories' chances. If that were the outcome of the election, Labour would probably win a majority of 190-odd seats. Silly - isn't it?

## Old habits dine hard

A survey out today shows a surprisingly high proportion of the population never eats "ethnic" food. The flipside of the finding is that a large number of people eat a great deal of rogan josh, spaghetti alle vongole or egg-fried rice. Eating habits may seem a trivial form of distinguishing people. But cultural divisions remain deep, separating the old from the young, city dwellers from those who live in the country - and those to whom fennel and coriander are essential from those who add only salt and pepper. The survey is a reminder that "internationalisation" has not touched large chunks of British society, at least in that significant part of our social anatomy - the stomach.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### We're back on the road to Wigan Pier

Sir: Paul Ashton suggests that malnutrition in Britain today is due more to fecklessness on the part of benefit claimants than to inadequate levels of benefit (letters, 3 December). He goes on to describe a meal produced for less than £1.50 per head.

Such arguments are not new. George Orwell comments on a similar "disgusting public wrangle about the minimum weekly sum on which a human being could keep alive" in his 1937 essay *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

Income Support/Jobseeker's Allowance rates are lower than those quoted by Mr Ashton. A single person aged 18 to 24 receives £37.90 each week. An extra £10 is paid to those aged 25 or over.

This weekly allowance is intended to cover the cost of fuel, replacement clothing, furniture and household equipment, toiletries, cleaning materials, transport and leisure items as well as food. Additionally, those people living in private rented accommodation are likely to have to meet a significant shortfall between their rent and their Housing Benefit.

It is also worth noting that many benefit claimants live on large estates or without their own transport. This makes it difficult to use supermarkets - forcing people to use local shops, which often have only a limited range of fresh food while charging higher prices.

Mr Ashton's final suggestion that the problem lies with the misallocation of resources on non-essentials such as tobacco, alcohol and lottery tickets is typical of those who would rather find a victim to blame than address a problem. **MIKE BOLTON**  
Nottingham

Sir: It might be possible for a family on benefit to cover food bills, but if a child needs new clothes, shoes or school uniform then someone will go hungry that week. And if a major household item such as the cooker or washing machine fails, there is no provision for replacement.

We belong to a Catholic welfare group and we can state that it is not possible to exist, long-term, on benefit. The charity we work for is contacted weekly by welfare professionals - health visitors and social workers - with requests to provide basic essentials such as clothes, furniture, bedding, fridges, cookers, washing machines and even money for food and heating bills. If the welfare professionals are pushed into reliance on the voluntary sector then there certainly must be huge holes in the welfare net.

**WINSTON WALLER**  
**JOANNA WALLER**  
Whitstable, Kent

Sir: The Government is to reduce Housing Benefit for unemployed people, to encourage such people to find jobs and force them into sharing accommodation (*"Budget Special"*, 27 November). The assumption seems to be that the unemployed are idle layabouts, and that there are lots of jobs just waiting for them.

My son is 36. He overcame the considerable disability of deafness and obtained a good qualification in engineering. He worked for several years in computer-aided design with a firm in the Midlands, but was made redundant when the



CONCERNS GROW OVER GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FARM ANIMALS

firm had to reduce staff. He has written many hundreds of letters and applications, and has had dozens of interviews. But after four years, he is still unemployed.

This is the kind of person which this policy is going to penalise. The question is asked: "Why should the taxpayer pay for those who don't work? Who pays for our much-wanted increase in productivity?" In our industries we have increased productivity by the simple device of increasing the number of non-productive people, and it is they who are paying.

Our son has lived for about 10 years in a small one-bedroom flat in Wolverhampton; this is one of his few forms of dignity and independence - he is going to have to give it up under the new policy? The policy now being announced penalises those who are already suffering from their inability to contribute to the productivity of this country. This is a fundamentally immoral proposition.

**BISHOP JOHN D DAVIES**  
Francyllie, North Wales  
The writer is former Bishop of Shrewsbury

Sir: Paul Ashton clearly believes that the virtuous restraint he exerts over his food budget should be an inspiration to all social security claimants.

Thank goodness I don't have to share the dinner table with him. Such mean-spiritedness in condemning the right of claimants to enjoy a few non-essential items must make him a pretty unappealing dinner companion.

Pass the sick bag.  
**PAUL RICKARD**  
Kingston, Surrey

### Hung parliament is on the cards

Sir: There has been much analysis (27 November and following) on whether the Budget will help the Conservatives to win the general election - or on whether the Budget will make no difference and Labour might be still on course to win.

A case can be made that a hung Parliament is statistically the most likely outcome.

The outcome of the 1992 general election was, in terms of seats, as follows: Conservative 336, Labour 271, Others 44. As a result of subsequent boundary changes and an increase in the total number of seats from 651 to 659, and ignoring by-election results (and defections) since 1992, the parties appear to go into 1997 roughly as follows in national terms: Conservative 340, Labour 275, Others 44; this equates to an overall Conservative majority over all other parties of 21.

Three working assumptions can realistically be made for the purposes of projecting the 1997 election result: i) There will be no net movement between "Others" and either of the two largest parties; ii) Labour will not lose any seats to the Conservatives in net terms; iii) Labour will not end up with an overall majority of more than 60. Such a majority would effectively involve Labour gaining 85 seats from the Conservatives. It should be noted that just to win an overall majority of 1, Labour needs to gain 55 seats from the

Conservatives. Within the model devised above, the following range of results can be deduced: i) Labour wins 0 to 10 seats, Conservative overall majority; ii) Labour wins 11 to 54 seats, hung parliament; iii) Labour wins 55 to 85 seats: overall Labour majority of up to 60.

It can be seen that the "hung parliament" range, consisting of 11 to 54 seats gained by Labour, represents over half of the potential range of 0 to 85 seats gained by Labour. This does seem to suggest that a hung parliament is rather more likely than the financial markets appear currently to assume.

**MCFITZPATRICK**  
Head of Economics  
Chanrey Villacou  
London WC1

Sir: Your front page article of 2 December suggests that John Major may go to the polls earlier than 1 May, in part because the Ulster Unionists are unhappy with the prospect of a general election on the same day as the local elections here.

This seems rather improbable; our local elections will take place on Wednesday 21 May, so it is rather unlikely that the Westminster elections will coincide with them.

Your correspondent correctly notes that our local elections use proportional representation, but goes on to suggest that this system favours Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party.

In fact the DUP has got fewer

votes in recent local elections than in European elections or last May's Forum elections; and the operation of the Single Transferable Vote clearly favours "centre" parties such as the DUP, the SDLP and the Alliance Party, rather than parties on the extreme. Even in 1981, when the DUP got slightly more votes than the DUP in local elections, they did not win quite as many seats.

**NICHOLAS WHYTE**  
Party Organiser, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland  
Belfast

### 'Apartheid' on the West Bank

Sir: I was saddened to read Patrick Cockburn's report from the West Bank ("Netanyahu says Palestinian land is empty", 28 November). The report said: "Mr Netanyahu may not be in favour of ethnic cleansing but his belief that the West Bank is 'empty' will worry Palestinians."

I have just returned from the West Bank where I met the widow of Atallah Amira, the 36-year-old Palestinian referred to in the article who was shot dead by Israeli soldiers for protesting peacefully against the confiscation of his land.

The Palestinians in this community are more than just worried. There is also confusion and fear - why was an unarmed man shot during a non-violent protest at an illegal confiscation? There is a sense of betrayal - two months ago the Israeli government

promised Atallah they would not take his land but then they moved the fence surrounding the Israeli settlement to include the land. And there is profound shock - Atallah's death was entirely unprovoked and his pregnant widow is now responsible for their seven young children.

The West Bank is far from "empty". The Palestinian communities which live there are being carved up and hemmed in by the Israeli programme of road and settlement building, and restricted from moving freely around. Many Palestinians talk of a state of apartheid, and the sorts of restrictions imposed on families like Atallah's do nothing to counter that view.

**ANGELA BURTON**  
Christian Aid  
London SE1

### Ode to Celsius

Sir: When the Met Office abandoned Fahrenheit in the 1960s ("Whatever happened to Fahrenheit?", 30 November), it was, I recall, *New Scientist* which produced a rhyme along the lines of "Thirty days hath September" to assist with the transition.

This related Celsius temperatures to day-to-day weather, rather than to the better known but perhaps less useful freezing and boiling points of water, as follows:

Five and ten and twenty-one,  
Winter, Spring and Summer sun.

I have always found this a great facility in assimilating Celsius temperatures to discussion of the weather.  
**ROBERT COOK**  
London W11

### Insult to teenage vegetarians

Sir: Virginia Ironside (Dilemmas, 28 November) is obviously not very in tune with the young people of today if she can only offer such a cynical and ignorant view of our principles.

I could not help but take the article as a personal insult, being a fellow teenage vegetarian and relating as well as I do to Zoe's daughter.

How can Miss Ironside pretend to deduce this girl's deep psychological motives for becoming a vegetarian from a short note penned by her mother?

Even if Miss Ironside were a qualified mind-reader and Zoe's daughter had changed her diet for nothing more than raging hormones, it is an outrage that this should be turned into a generalisation. I deeply hope that your readers do not begrudge their children the right to their beliefs because of these pompous spoutings.

I will not grow out of my vegetarianism, because my decision to give up meat was a mature, rational choice. I passionately love animals and gave up many favourite foods and the chance to wear the latest fashions to stick by my opinions.

I plead with Zoe not to take the article seriously. How can you treat your daughter on the advice of someone who says that a growing girl can live on bread and jam?  
**KATIE COCKER**  
aged 15  
Birmingham

### Stone of Wessex

Sir: On a hillside in the village of Kingsdon Deverill, Wiltshire, is the ancient stone on which the kings of Wessex were anointed and crowned ("Scots got the Stone, but Major wants the jam", 16 November).

As the kings of Wessex (like the Kings of Scotland later) eventually became the kings of England, could not this stone be shaped to fit the Confessor's throne in the Abbey?

**ANTHONY F TROTMAN**  
Salisbury

### Point-scoring

Sir: So the big wigs in Basildon Labour Party say they're going to expel Terry Marsh ("Terry Marsh comes out fighting for the Lib Dems", 30 November)? It says something about the Labour Party's complacency that it takes a former member to stand for another party before they realise he left a year ago.

**JUDITH FRYER**  
Liberal Democrat Head of Press  
House of Commons  
London SW1

### Penny dreadful

Sir: The recently announced reduction in the basic rate of income tax has led to a proliferation in the use of the incongruity "one penny" by journalists and broadcasters. Whatever happened to the penny? No less objectionable is "one pence", more redolent of a single act of misanthropy (popularly known as "spending a penny") than of a unit of currency.

**Dr A J HEAD**  
Leatherhead,  
Surrey

## essay

# Very sexy. Big mistake

Supermodels lay bare their feelings against the fur trade, while the EU decides on whether to ban the leghold trap. But the noisy animal welfarists could do more harm than good, argues Richard D North

Millions of women will soon be sighing for the chance to emulate Madonna's wearing of fur, as paraded before them in the movie *Evita*, which opens here after Christmas.

Already, the European fur trade is enjoying a recovery. The economy is out of recession, and – perhaps as important – the world seems tired of being bullied by campaigners.

Many of the fur trade's best customers are sassy young women celebrating their coming-of-age and not easily intimidated. Yet next Monday EU environment ministers will decide whether or not finally to bring into force a ban on the leghold trap, a device which epitomises the fur trade.

If they do, after a year's delay, nearly everyone, from the British Veterinary Association to the animal rights campaigners, and including John Gummer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, will believe they are helping to bring to an end an abuse of animals so gross that only the most hard-hearted could object.

For most animal campaigners, the leghold trap is (as the groups' most recent ad has it) a "hideously cruel device", in which an animal will endure "agonising pain, as it is caught in the vice-like grip of the trap's

jaws". Actually, judging by its effect on a human hand (yes, I've tried it), the moment of impact of a modern leghold trap is not painful, and its grip is firm rather than vice-like. Still, while some welfarists will concede that a killing trap (one which dispatches quickly and with minimal suffering) could be described as humane, it is unlikely any would accept that a leghold trap might ever be.

But even the welfare issue is not what is commonly thought. Bob Carmichael is not obviously hard-hearted. He is the chief of game and fur management for the wildlife branch of the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources. A wildlife biologist, he is a gentle type, and says of the fur trade: "I feel very good about it. The net effect of buying a fur coat is to reduce animal suffering and to help people."

Throughout the northern part of North America there is a tundra wilderness which shades into Arctic barrenness. It is home to fur and, the latter carried on hardy and beautiful animals.

The continent's native peoples – Indian populations shading into Inuit, or Eskimos – are relatively few. Many of them are wholly welfare-dependent, and quite a high proportion alcohol and drug-dependent too.

A very few of these people go out trapping, which, on the

whole, they do rather less efficiently and vigorously than the similar number of trappers among the even fewer white people who live in the region.

Sandy Beatty, a Swampy Cree from Cross Lake, Manitoba, told me, and his dignity was compelling if partisan: "I went off from my village to fight for the Mother Country in the Second World War. I was in an anti-tank regiment and we fought from Normandy to Germany. I think I earned the right to be heard when I ask for the freedom to use what God has put here."

One often hears native people talk about their relationship with nature, their respect for and even veneration of their prey. What is sure is that it is the best – the more independent, the more feisty – of the aboriginal people who go out trapping, and there is real moral value in that. With average trapper earnings at about \$1,000 a year, its being a minority activity of small economic consequence makes it all the more poignant.

But the native trapper is not the whole of the story. His rights have been much promoted by the US and Canadian governments, but do not to the degree one might suppose actually drive official anxieties about the proposed ban.

About half of Canada's \$450m fur trade is in farmed fur, and only about 15 per cent of fur sold in Europe is trapped.

The EU regulation under discussion this week is supposed to bring into force from next January a ban on the import of any fur from 13 mostly valuable species, and whether it is trapped or farmed, from countries which have not banned the leghold trap.

But there is a let-out clause, and in recent days it has been the subject of intense international negotiation. The proposed regulation says that countries which can persuade the EU that they have invented and will use a "humane" trap could carry on with the leghold trap.

Welfarists such as John Gummer and almost all the campaigners believe that no leghold trap, however modified, could ever be called humane, and that the let-out clause can't be invoked.

But it looked last week as though the EU might strike a deal in which welfarism and pragmatism would be reconciled. Mr Gummer has already said that provided he is persuaded that there will ultimately be a ban on the leghold trap, and that it happens within a strict timetable, he can accept some delay in its introduction.

More to the point, a ban might be agreed on Monday, but not be implemented due to fears of diplomatic pressure from northern America on its implications for free trade. In short, European environment ministers may satisfy their consciences that they argued for virtuous policy, but add that nasty trade ministers scuppered it.

Although campaigners will be angry at any compromise, there is actually much to be said for it. While a humane trap is widely regarded as being oxymoronic, the fur trade and the governments of Canada and, to a lesser extent, the US have invested large sums of money in trying to improve the operation of all traps, including the leghold. They seem to have been quite successful.

Most species of animal – the weasel, mink and marten, for instance – are mostly and best trapped by killing devices which break their victims' necks, or brain them. Improved versions of these traps have been made more widespread. The less fundamentalist of the welfarists accept they cause little suffering. Some traps drown their target – a five- or 10-minute process whose nastiness is obvious – but acceptable to many. It's only for fox, coyote and wolf that the leghold trap is regarded as the best option.

because the animals are too big for it to be sure that a killing trap could be powerful enough to effect quick death.

At sufficient expense, Canada and the US could buy in most of the leghold traps and replace them with killing traps for use with all but the larger species, most of the time. Only recent budget cuts stopped such a programme in Canada. But even if the policy was a success, it would still be necessary to leghold many and perhaps most of the animals now trapped that way.

The fur trade is not the main reason for this. The leghold is used to hold animals which damage roads and drains at a cost of millions of dollars a year, and in these cases is used precisely because it seldom damages and hardly ever cripples its prey in other words, it's as safe as anything could be near pests who might wander inadvertently into the trap.

In Louisiana, the state says it must use the leghold to trap the nutria – or coypu – which is wrecking coastal wetlands. It says shooting would not work in the swampy forests, and in any case would rob the hunters of a useful income.

Of course, it is important to consider the degree of suffering caused by legholds. Alex Sanderson, who trains trappers for the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources (another man who impresses with his ordinary gentleness), remarks: "I had to use leghold traps when I was asked to move six foxes from a golf course. They were all fine after a day in a trap."

This accords with respectable Canadian research which suggests that stress levels in leghold traps are often quite low. Mr Sanderson says: "The important thing is that the animal should be able to move the trap so that it can get off the path and if possible hide. Then you find him lying down and relaxed. It's when you approach that he gets excited". This may explain, the traps' defenders say, why it is so

easy to get pictures of distressed animals in traps.

I have met no one who admits to having seen the classic protesters' image: an animal which has chewed off its own leg. But knowledgeable people, admitting there is sometimes damage and pain, say the worst case must be very rare and would represent wasted time and money on the trapper's part: a wounded animal means a damaged pelt.

But in any case, does causing some suffering to wild animals really matter? Plenty of fur-bearing animals die of crippling diseases, most of the young of some species die in their first year or so of hunger and cold; only a few have the luxury of dying of the same causes in a ripe old age.

"Wild animals don't get up in the morning and expect to go through their day without stress," says Bob Carmichael. A few – even, in rare cases, tens – of hours in a trap followed by a quick death may not be as bad a fate as nature had designed unaided.

But even if the leghold trap in any form were the abomination it is commonly supposed, the EU ban might well not achieve its desired effects.

It almost certainly would not much damage the fur trade in Europe, and might not much influence trapping in the northern countries. According to Frank Zilberkweit, chairman of the British Fur Trade Association, his members have plenty of farmed skins to offer their customers. More important, he points out that Europe is by no means the only market for wild fur – Asia and Russia are coming along fast.

Even if fur-trapping countries decided to ban the leghold, they would continue with the killing traps which would be nearly as offensive to rich and noisy welfarists.

If the northern countries decide to continue with the leghold, and incur the ban on imports to the EU, one difference would be that wild fur coats would be made up in

Asia, where they are now often bought, instead of in Greece and Italy, the current main manufacturing areas. The number of animals suffering in legholds might eventually be returned to present levels.

But the amount of animal suffering might be increased, because the impetus for reform of trapping methods would be lost. According to Mr Zilberkweit, "As long as the EU is involved my voice as a leading trader has some influence. I say to the Americans and Canadians, 'You've got to improve your systems'. If we don't have that clout, the people with the loudest voice will be those with least concern." Leaving aside how much the trade has really campaigned on welfare issues, the point holds good for EU pressure in general.

Any Saturday, customers slip into one of London's smartest furriers in Conduit Street to fulfil one of the oldest sartorial dreams. They pass a small band of protesters shouting anti-fur slogans. Perhaps neither group is ethically attractive: the affluent thoughtlessly pursuing luxury and the protesters hysterically pursuing self-righteousness.

Beyond the risk to the rights of human minorities – in this case the rich and the native – there are serious doubts about whether the latest outburst of EU moralising would by itself do much for the animals either.

In fact, what is likely to happen is that international negotiations continue to apply pressure on the northern countries to improve trapping methods where they can and to defend obviously cruel methods where they must. Between defensible freedom for trade and quieting welfarist clamour, the suffering that demand for fur inflicts might be substantially reduced, with talk of bans never far away, but their implementation never quite achieved.

"We'd rather go naked than wear fur."



Every fur coat means animals died a painful death by electrocution, drowning, or being gassed. **DON'T WEAR FUR!**

For more information please write: PETA P.O. Box 42516 Washington, DC 20015 USA

**PETA**

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS.

## More women are victims of INTESTACY than DIVORCE

A woman, on average, lives longer than a man. So she is more likely to have to face the difficulties of intestacy – the legal term for being left in a mess because her husband didn't make a Will.

Many men assume that, on their death, all they own will automatically go to their wives. This isn't so. When a man dies intestate, not just his wife but brothers, sisters and even cousins may have a claim on what he owned.

His widow may have to sell the house to pay off his relations.

None of this need happen if he makes a will. Yet seven out of ten people fail to take this simple step.

Now, as a service to the public, WWF UK (World Wide Fund For Nature) has produced its own plain language guide to making a will. It explains:

- why everyone needs to make a will
- how to go about it
- and how to minimise tax liability on what you leave behind.

Don't leave it to chance. Give yourself the peace of mind of knowing your loved ones are properly provided for.

Send or phone for our FREE guide to making a Will, today.

Please send me my FREE copy of your guide to Wills and Will-making. (Allow 28 days for delivery)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms  
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Sent to: Sally Burrows,  
Legacies Officer WWF UK  
(World Wide Fund For Nature),  
Freeman, Panda House,  
Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1BR.  
No stamp is needed.  
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## Regal angle to a legal wrangle



Miles Kingdon

The most extraordinary bit of litigation going on at the moment is a case in the High Court, where the Tory Party is being sued by Mr and Mrs Norbert. They claim that they (the Norberts) have been given inadequate government for the last 13 years, that the Government should have managed things better, and that they (the Norberts) should be compensated.

Here, for your enlightenment, is a recent extract from this startling case, in which

Mr Heseltine, among others, took the witness stand. Counsel: Your name is Michael Heseltine?

Heseltine: It is. Counsel: You have been one of the major participants at cabinet level in the present Government?

Heseltine: I have that honour. Counsel: Which honour?

Heseltine: Of serving in Her Majesty's Government. Counsel: You call that an honour? You call it an honour to be one of this shifty, unprincipled, unqualified, shameless crew?

Heseltine: Oh, come off it, sorry. You can try any amount of abuse but it won't wash. I eat today interviewers for breakfast, and they're a lot cleverer than you.

Counsel: So, Mr Heseltine, you have a high opinion of Her Majesty's Government?

Heseltine: We have brought this country through stormy times into calm seas. We have built the foundation on which prosperity can rise. We look forward to a time when our economic stewardship...

Counsel: Just a minute, Mr Heseltine. You have been in power for a decade and a

half. You have had 15-odd years in power. Yet prosperity is still just around the corner! After 15 years you are still looking ahead to good times!

Why are they not here now? Heseltine: Oh, but they are! Counsel: Oh, but they are not. We have already heard how far behind other countries in the EC we are. We have heard how much in debt we are. We have heard many other statistics. Are you totally insensitive to them all?

Heseltine: Look here, this new Budget leaves us all better off. It really does. It puts £370, yes, £370 into the pocket of every family in Britain...

Is Labour really saying that they don't want us to give £370, yes, £370, to every family in Britain?

Judge: Mr Heseltine, I have given you due warning. I have warned you that if you treat this court as if you were trying your tricks on the much vaunted BBC chat show Today, you will be out of here.

You have paid no attention to my warning. You are out of here.

Heseltine: But, my Lord... Judge: Out! Heseltine is ejected.

Counsel: Call the next witness, Mr William Wendover! Judge: Just a moment, just a moment. Do you mean Mr William Waldegrave?

Counsel: No, my Lord. Mr William Wendover. He is a man I met in the pub last night, my Lord.

Judge: Oh, this is ridiculous! Are we going to go through the population of Britain one by one? Already this case has made legal history by lasting longer than any case since those two took on that hamburger place...

Lawyer: [Interrupting from the public gallery] I must warn this court that I am here on behalf of McDonald's and that any such further remark will be followed by a writ!

Judge: Get that man out of here! There is a struggle, and he is ejected, leaving a faint but pervasive smell of cooking oil.

Judge: Now, you were saying... Counsel: At the start of the trial, my Lord, you were saying that it was important to know what the man on the Clapham omnibus was thinking. Well, as you are perhaps aware, there is no longer an

omnibus in Clapham. Judge: Is there not? Good Lord. Then how do people get out of Clapham?

Counsel: I believe they buy a house in Dulwich or Chelsea, or move to the country.

Judge: I see. Counsel: But as a pub is the modern equivalent of the Clapham omnibus, I took the liberty of asking Mr Wendover what he thought of the present Government.

Judge: And what did he say? Counsel: He said it was dis-bolical.

Judge: That's good enough for me. No need to call him. On to the next witness!

Counsel: Call Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth III.

Judge: Is that quite necessary? Counsel: Of course. The Norberts are suing Her Majesty's Government. I think she should have a say.

Judge: Well, you can try it. I doubt if she will appear, though. Still, good luck. Wake me if and when she arrives.

Counsel: Call Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth III. Queen: Here I am. More sensational developments tomorrow!



## the commentators

## Now it's your call on Europe, Mr Blair

What a temptation for Tony Blair. On Tuesday, John Major, with all the enthusiastic spontaneity of an RAF Tornado pilot paraded on TV by his Iraqi captors, restated the policy as spelled out by Michael Heseltine: the Government will continue to leave open the issue of monetary union.

Now imagine this: in a few days' time Blair announces that Labour will not take Britain into a single currency in the first wave – or perhaps even in the next Parliament. *Karpow*. There is mayhem in the Tory party: Conservative Central Office foresees Labour's rating among an increasingly Euro-sceptic public breaking all known records. Worse, the grievance of the Euro-sceptics, already incandescent at Major for his refusal to do exactly that, is now compounded by the realisation that if he had taken their advice he would have avoided being humiliated by Blair.

But the Prime Minister still faces a gruesome dilemma. If he decides, as electoral logic now dictates and most of his Cabinet are demanding, to rule out a single currency after all, Clarke (and perhaps Heseltine) will go, wounding pointing out as they do that Tony Blair is now running Major's European policy. And if he doesn't, his electoral strategy is holed below the waterline – and not just because the Tory party would be torn apart. Instead of rubbing British nationalism against wishy-washy Labour pro-Europeanism, the Tories are stuck with being the puny ditherers, against Labour, unforgiving defenders of the pound.

This isn't just fiction. Indeed, it describes as precisely as possible the political earthquake that would be detonated by a Blair decision to rule out joining EMU at its outset. And there are other reasons why it is tempting. Gordon Brown wouldn't like it any more than Clarke. But Robin Cook, and Jack Straw would welcome it, as would, perhaps, John Prescott and Margaret Beckett. Nor does it conflict that much with the assessment of a number of central bankers, economic commentators and even Treasury officials who frequently cast grave doubt on the wisdom or probability of early British EMU entry. You don't have to be a deep-dyed Euro-sceptic to harbour grave doubts about whether, in the real world, a Labour government would take Britain into a single currency during its first Parliament. It wouldn't even be such an unmanageable U-turn to rule it out. Did not Tony Blair, in his recent speech in Paris, dwell at some length on the potential obstacles?

So why on earth not do it? The diplomatic reason is that it would certainly set back Tony Blair's professed intention of making a fresh start in Europe. Even those national leaders sceptical about whether a Labour Britain would join, would squirm. And anyway, the opinion poll evidence isn't as persuasive as the sceptics suggest. It's true that most polls show



Donald Macintyre

John Major may well have handed Labour's leader the trump card, but can he play it?

Jenkins did over EEC entry in 1972, defy a three-line whip in his own party to back Labour. And he might like a significant minority of Conservative MPs with him. Then Labour has to get it through a referendum in which – unlike in 1975 – the main parties will both maintain collective Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet responsibility. Suddenly, the Tory split which has never quite been a split becomes a reality. Suddenly, the possibility of a pro-European, centrist, grouping sympathetic to the principal aims of a Blair government becomes a reality. (Even more so if a referendum opts for a version of electoral reform which would sustain a Clarke-led grouping as a new party.) And suddenly a Blair-led administration underpinned by alliances with Liberal Democrats and pro-European Tories starts to look like a very long-term prospect indeed. Fantasy? Perhaps. Impossible? Not quite.

You won't hear a single senior politician contemplate anything like this side of the election. Moreover, long before this, Blair could face internal dangers of his own. An anti-EMU Shadow Cabinet majority, perhaps led by Robin Cook, would probably be as easy to assemble as a Cabinet one, especially if Blair allowed policy on a single currency to drift through the next Parliament. But there is one big difference: modern Labour politicians divide over EMU on economic and not constitutional grounds. No one, Cook included, has said they object in principle. So it's not just that it's not in the national interest to rule it out now. He is also free to remind Euro-sceptic supporters till he's blue in the face that Labour would only join a single currency if Cabinet, People and Parliament agreed. A triple-lock, which would be enough for John Major, too, if he had a remotely manageable party.

convincing majorities against EMU. But it's also, perhaps mysteriously, true that they show equally convincing majorities in favour of maintaining an open mind until the decision has to be taken. Equally disappointed would be those big businesses which may well start beating the drum for EMU once the election is over.

Out would go a lot of Labour's astonishing, but far from baseless, claim to be in sight of replacing the Tories as the party of big industry. Finally, Blair may yet just want to go in during the next Parliament. After all, if economic arguments – monetary stability, fiscal discipline, lower transaction costs – work at all, they work especially for a Labour Party historically prone in government to market pressure to maintain a credible counter-inflation policy.

These may be persuasive; and they are part of why Blair won't rule EMU out. But they aren't, perhaps, as exciting as the short-term electoral one for ruling it out. So Labour electoral strategy junkies should consider a further point. Let's suppose that a Blair-led government does after all decide to go into EMU. First it has to get it through Parliament. It's a safe bet that Clarke would, as Roy

I appear to have acquired a puppy. Don't ask me how. For years I've been ignoring the children's tearful demands for kittens, bunnies, hamsters, goldfish, velociraptors etc, explaining to them that the keeping of pets is a debased form of Victorian anthropomorphism and had no place in a post-Freudian society. They were impressed by this searching analysis, although the five-year-old stamped very hard on my foot shortly afterwards. Then, out of the blue, a friend rang and said, I've got this four-week-old Labrador cross, would you ... ? And we said Yes, and that was that.

A terrible mistake. As dogs go, it is a complete non-starter. Now eight weeks old – therefore, in dog-years, an early teenager – she (it's a bitch) (believe me) cannot beg, sit up, roll over, fetch sticks, bite postmen or sniff out cocaine stashes. This dog does only three things. 1) It lies on the kitchen floor, as if sapped with a cosh. If you pick it up and put it down again, it subsides onto the floor completely flat, like a sandbag. 2) It bounces in a demented and uncontrollable fashion, landing its soggy paws on one's immaculate Combes Des Garçons strides and chasing the baby – the last fortnight has been one constant re-run of that old Coppertone advert with the



puppy and the little girl's knickers. And 3) it eats shudderingly revolting things, including bits of the *Financial Times*, the *Thompson Local Directory* (Lambeth area) and split granules of dishwasher powder. And every so often,



Next she'll be getting stress counselling for the trauma of forgetting where she hid her chew-bone

john walsh

drag queen in the movies of John Waters. The bad guy in *Polseras* is a similarly corpulent Brit, a pomaded and Pomeranian-clutching old sweetie. The Wicked Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is a de-sexed Lady Macbeth. Frodo, the ghostly cleric who consigns *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to the bell-tower, may pretend to fancy Esmerelda, but is plainly as queer as Dick's bathband. I could go on, but the theory starts to run out of steam when it gets to Captain Hook

Nice to have the Eurostar back with us, is it not? Good to feel that passengers anxious to brave the Channel Tunnel, even after its small spot of bother two weeks ago, can book their not-perilous-at-all



journeys through the northern tunnel, safe in the knowledge that it's only the completely dissimilar southern tunnel that was damaged by the freight-train fire and that obviously it could never happen again. I have every confidence in the Anglo-French safety authority's "satisfaction" with the new evacuation arrangements in the event of fire or flood, and note that, although their most recent "practice evacuation" took half an hour longer than the time recommended by themselves, it was deemed to be perfectly OK anyway. If you detect a note of concern

in my voice, it's because, for the past two weeks, I have watched the Eurostar hurtling along the railway track at the end of my garden, morning and evening, empty of passengers but clearly on its way to something. Finally I rang them. What were the trains being used for? "Oh, crew training, maintenance

work, that kind of thing," said an airy voice. "We've been running a few in regional services, but without passengers." But look, I said, until the safety review is complete, aren't the crews of the trains in danger? "From what?" he asked. From whatever is being investigated by the Safety Authority, I said. "Look," he said, "as long as we're not carrying passengers, it's perfectly legal." And that's that. The attitude of the safety people throughout this inquiry seems to have been, "Oh, it'll do." I'll stick to Townsend Thoresen for the present, thanks.

## A voice that launched 1,000 posters

We catch this performance at a delicate juncture: who can say which way it is going to play? The guy may go up and up and up, until he's a household name like Pavarotti, and people whose musical sights never rose far above Status Quo line up to buy his records; or Roberto Alagna could nose dive to disaster and obscurity.

Roberto Alagna, the national "Fourth Tenor", mooted successor to Carreras, Domingo and Pavarotti, has got a nice voice, though debate rages as to whether it's more like Pavarotti's or Domingo's or more like a much lighter French tenor. But besides the voice he's got a fantastic life story.

"The story of Roberto Alagna is the stuff of Hollywood," an EMI publicist enthuses in a new film about the singer due to be shown on Channel 4 early in the new year. "No record company executive could make it up."

If Alagna vanishes without trace in the next two or three years, it will be his romantic life story he has to blame for encouraging his record company to thrust him too fast and eagerly into the public eye.

Today, "storyline" is the key ingredient in the manufacture of celebrity. "If there is one thing that serves more than anything else to involve audiences any other to involve audiences with celebrities," write the authors of *High Visibility*, an American manual to the art and science of celebrity manufacture, "it is the storyline."

"The conscious design, manipulation and promotion of storylines in celebrities' lives – up to the point of creating realities more dramatic than real life – constitutes the celebrity industry's major breakthrough in the 1970s and 1980s."

In Roberto Alagna's case, he gave it to them on a plate. The blond, blue-eyed, chubby-cheeked, habitually grinning 33-year-old singer was born and raised in a grimy outer suburb of Paris, the eldest son of a Sicilian bricklayer.

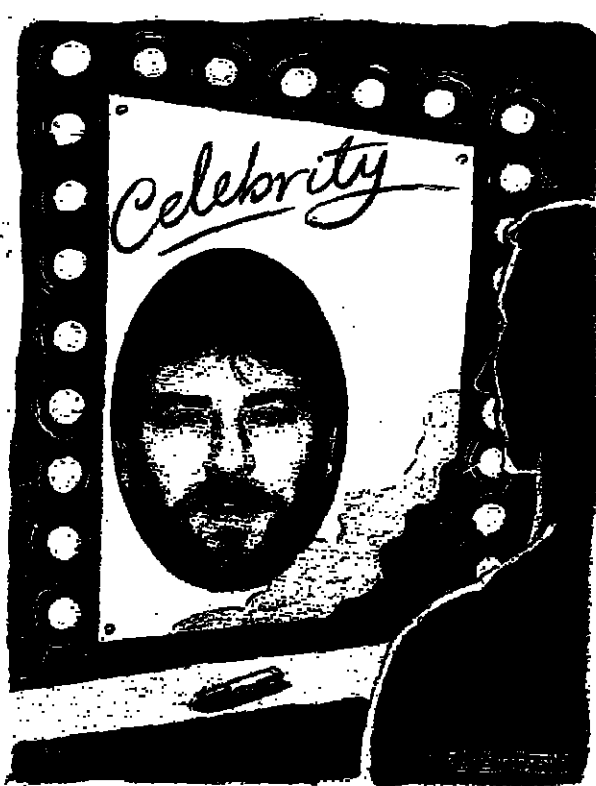
He had none of the conservative training of his peers on the stages of the world's opera houses: instead he was discovered by an obscure Cuban pianist who taught him all he knew. Thereupon, Alagna was hoisted out of the pizzerias where, his publicists say, he strummed and warbled, and was groomed for stardom.

So far so heart-warming – but that's not the half of it. Roberto was a married man, proud father of a pretty daughter, Olanna. Then just as his singing career was taking off, his wife fell grievously ill.

Alagna cut back his singing commitments to spend time with her; but the brain tumour finally took her life. Playing the lead in romantic operas like *Romeo et Juliette* and *La Bohème*, it was common for Roberto to end the show with the young heroine dead in his arms. The aisles ran with tears.

But it gets better. Roberto now falls in love with the sultry young Romanian soprano Angela Gheorghiu. Angela divorces her husband, leaving him and their two children behind in Bucharest (a detail downplayed by the publicity departments), and in June of this year they marry! For EMI, Alagna is now a hot item, with Angela an irresistible new twist.

"When we first became aware of Roberto's relationship with Angela," Alagna's Gauthreau of Angel EMI Records in New York says, "our reaction was, 'this is a great love story and we should use this'."



The blue-eyed son of a bricklayer is thrust onto the stage. His wife dies tragically, but he finds love again. It's the stuff of opera ... but is it the stuff of opera singers?

By Peter Popham

Before Alagna's debut at the New York Met in April, the bus shelters of Manhattan were plastered with posters of the new sensation. "It was important to create a real image campaign, more like a pop star, to make him more accessible," Gauthreau explains. "It was important to let people know he's not only a great tenor, he's a hunk ... Imagining, imagining, imagining: the poster has his very piercing blue eyes staring straight at the camera."

If Alagna was in fact a pop singer, none of this "imagining" would raise an eyebrow. But the application of pop practice to classical music is still relatively new.

"The classical music business is extremely competitive," says EMI's Roger Lewis. "It changed dramatically way back in 1990, with the explosion of the Three Tenors, Pavarotti on his own, Nigel Kennedy and Kiri Te Kanawa, and the world opened up to the fact that the potential sales of classical recordings was far greater than had previously been thought."

On their last appearance in Los Angeles, the Three Tenors and their maestro were paid an advance of \$11m. With sums like that, the packaging and selling of a classical music celebrity becomes a more ruthless enterprise than ever before.

The people likely to suffer from this are the singers themselves. The soprano Sally Bradshaw says, "the opera world is littered with dead bodies." She mentions one name, "a massive star 10 years ago, who has sunk without trace. She had a magnificent, really special voice, but now it's in ribbons. The record companies savagely exploit names and personalities, shoving the singers into the limelight – they produce a few blooms and they're finished."

EMI insist that they mean to take good care of their property. "What we are investing now, which is considerable, we will reap back in 30 years' time," says a spokesman. "Look at Callas – we're still living off her. This is a voice we have to treat with a great deal of respect and a great deal of care."

Yet Alagna's hectic schedule of performance and recording belies such protestations. At his debut in the Met, his voice began to crack, and he had to be talked out of quitting in mid-show. "The man's a nervous wreck," opined a disappointed member of the New York audience. "He tried the top B – it came out like a frog," said another. "He's supposed to be the Fourth Tenor – that wasn't the voice of the Fourth Tenor."

London audiences lost the opportunity to judge for themselves when he and Angela pulled out of three planned performances of *La Bohème* at Covent Garden in October, suffering from the effects of their heavy schedules.

Jonathan Miller, who has twice produced Alagna in *La Bohème*, is severely critical of the new star. "I'm afraid I had terrible trouble with him," he said earlier in the year. "I have had too many bad experiences with singers who have become suddenly successful ... These people have a sudden decomposition of success and then they get the spiritual bends."

"A really well-grounded operatic voice needs at least a decade to come to fruition," says Sally Bradshaw. A juicy life story, on the other hand, can be devoured by the public in a matter of months. Celebrity can't wait.

Tomorrow: The mind of the stalker

## Good-bye battery



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# business & city

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## Legal threat to domestic power free-for-all

Michael Harrison

Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity industry regulator, has been warned that his plans to open up the domestic market to full competition in 1998 are unlawful. The warning is contained in a confidential letter sent last month by lawyers acting for the 12 regional electricity companies (RECs) and the two Scottish power producers. The letter, written by a partner at the law firm Herbert Smith

and dated 19 November, claims the proposed regulatory framework would prevent electricity suppliers from recovering unpaid bills or disconnecting customers outside their own franchise areas who refuse to pay.

The letter also claims that it would be unlawful to proceed even with the phased introduction of competition if the new system has not been fully completed, tested and implemented by April 1998.

The problems thrown up by the proposed changes in the licences that all electricity suppliers will require are such that entirely new primary legislation may be required.

The letter comes just two days after Professor Littlechild turned down an appeal from the electricity industry for the liberalisation of the domestic market to be phased in over 18 months. Instead Professor Littlechild has decided that the phasing in

period should last only six months so that by September 1998 all 23 million domestic electricity customers will be entitled to shop around between suppliers.

The industry is also lobbying to be allowed to pass on the full costs of preparing for 1998 to their customers, but at between £500m and £1bn. The bulk of the money is investment in the computer systems, software and training needed to allow suppliers to settle accounts through

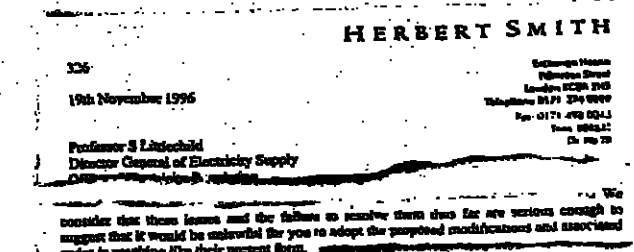
the electricity pool and supply customers outside their existing monopoly franchise areas.

Commenting on the "fundamental legal issues" that have yet to be resolved, the letter says: "We consider that these issues and the failure to resolve them thus far are serious enough to suggest that it would be unlawful for you to adopt the proposed modifications and associated codes in anything like their present form." If these problems remain unresolved it

would "undermine the legal basis of the 1998 project".

The RECs appear to be particularly concerned about how they would recover charges from customers who refused to pay or continued to receive electricity through their local supplier after a contract had expired with a "two-tier supplier" - a supplier other than the local electricity company.

"From their experience in the supply market to date our clients consider that market



participants could suffer significant losses as a result of this problem which would, in turn, be passed on to paying customers in higher prices.

Last night a spokeswoman for Professor Littlechild confirmed he had received the letter and had written back offering a meeting to discuss the concerns raised.

Changing labour market: Shake-out continues at banks and utilities but good times roll in leisure industry

## 10,000 jobs to go in NatWest branches ...

Jill Treanor  
Banking Correspondent

NatWest announced plans yesterday to cut at least 10,000 jobs in its high street banking operation in the next four to five years. This will leave it with just 27,000 high street staff by 2001.

The cuts are a result of the group's plans to build a "new retail bank". They confirm the fears of Bifu, the banking union, which warned of the scale of job losses earlier this year.

Bifu urged NatWest to go back to drawing board over the planned cuts. "By closing branches wholesale NatWest are pulling out of communities. Now they want to take employment away from communities too. We cannot endorse the creation of unemployment ghettos," said Alan Ainsworth, Bifu's chief negotiator at NatWest.

NatWest aims to have just 1,750 branches by 2001, which means the closure of 300 branches at the start of the decade.

The bank is also moving processing of cheques, now done in branches and at 150 specialist units around the country, to 60 locations. These will operate as telephone call centres and handle account management, cash movement and lending.

Mr Ainsworth said East Anglia would have one centre of between 30 to 60 staff and South Wales one centre with around 100 staff. There are no plans for centres in England north of Bolton, while in the West and South-west of England, the centres will be in Bristol and Plymouth.

The London area will be hit, with most of the operations work moving out to the M25.

Tim Jones, managing director, retail banking services at NatWest, said most of the cuts would be from "non-customer facing jobs". "There will be opportunities for staff to move to new roles," he said.

The rate of change of job losses was slowing down compared

with the past five years, during which time the bank had shed 16,000 from its workforce with "virtually" no compulsory redundancies, Mr Jones said.

Avoidance of compulsory job losses is the aim again this time, although he said that if they did become compulsory, staff would be warned six months in advance.

"We welcomed the pledge in October of no compulsory redundancies and will continue to contribute to the departure terms," Mr Ainsworth said.

The bank declined to specify how much the job losses and investment would cost, but it is believed it will cost hundreds of millions of pounds.

The project will involve new

technology being installed at the 60 locations. This technology will include a facility which will take a picture of the front and back of a cheque rather than involve a person inputting information from the cheque into a computer system.

Some of the 60 centres will just deal with this "voucher processing", while others will handle account management, dealing with post, sanctioning loans and debt recovery.

Phone calls to branches will be routed to centres in Bradford, Enfield, Hitchin, Leicester, Liverpool, North West Kent, Menai (North Wales), Plymouth, Solent, Teale and the West Midlands. These will provide a "one stop" service for telephone enquiries.

"The financial services marketplace is becoming increasingly competitive and the way our customers want to do business is changing," Mr Jones said. Midland Bank, which has the First Direct specialist telephone banking service, also routes its customer calls to centralised service centres.

NatWest's announcement coincided with the release of the annual Banking Ombudsman report, which showed a 22 per cent rise in telephone enquiries and complaints.



Cheers: Sir Ian Prosser said the jobs would be added in Bass's taverns and leisure divisions

Nigel Cope

Bass is to create 7,000 new jobs over the next year as part of an aggressive expansion of its brewing, pubs and leisure empire. The news follows the company's creation of 6,000 jobs last year.

However, Bass is expected to cut jobs through brewery closures if its proposed takeover of Carlsberg-Jetley receives clearance from the competition authorities. There was no news from the DTI yesterday, though some City analysts expect the deal to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. "We haven't heard anything," said Bass's chairman, Sir Ian Prosser.

The new jobs will form part of a £670m capital expenditure programme planned by Bass this year. Some 5,500 of the jobs will be in the group's taverns business, where around 200 new sites will open.

The Harvester pub-restaurant chain, the Fork & Pitcher concept of rural inns and the 15-strong All Bar One chain of modern city centre bars will all be expanded.

## ... but Bass takes on 7,000 in pubs boom

New branches of O'Neill's, Bass's Irish themed pubs, are being opened at the rate of more than one a week.

Bass's leisure division will add 1,500 jobs during the year with more bowling alleys and 13 larger bingo clubs set to open.

The creation of 700 jobs was announced yesterday by two car manufacturers - Rover and Honda - and by Moy Park, a poultry processing company in Northern Ireland. Honda is taking on 250 staff to work on the production line at its Swindon factory, where it produces the Civic small car and larger Accord saloon. Honda aims to boost output at Swindon from 100,000 to 150,000 cars a year before 1999. Rover is hiring another 100 specialist engineers at its new £25m design centre at Gaydon near Warwick.

In Northern Ireland, Moy Park will take on 350 staff as part of a £31.5m investment programme that involves the building of a £11m factory in Dungannon, County Tyrone.

The first two centres will open in Bristol and Thurrock, Essex, early next summer.

Bass announced the jobs programme as it reported a 12 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £671m in the year to 30 September, boosted by strong performances from the Holiday Inn hotel chain, Bass Taverns and branded drinks.

Hooper's Hooch, the market leading alcoholic lemonade, recorded spectacular gains, with Bass selling 330,000 barrels of the brew, compared with 40,000 last year. Sir Ian said there was no evidence to suggest the alcopop boom was a fad.

The Bass bingo subsidiary was hit by the lottery, with admissions down by 13 per cent. Profits were down at the Coral chain of betting shops due to a £4m hit caused by Frankie Dettori's record-breaking seven wins at Ascot earlier in the year. The meeting fell on the last Saturday of Bass's financial year.

Bass group sales were 12.5 per cent higher at £5.1bn and the dividend was increased by 10 per cent to 25.4p. Investment column, page 23

## ... and Southern Water axes 2,000

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

ScottishPower is to almost halve the size of the workforce at Southern Water, the privatised company it bought for £1.7bn earlier this year, through a combination of redundancies and disposals.

More than 700 jobs will go through a voluntary redundancy programme at Southern's main water and sewerage business, while a further 1,340 employees will leave the company after the sale of 14 non-core subsidiaries. The job reductions will be completed by March 1999.

The Worthing-based company currently has 4,450 staff, of which 2,213 work in its 20 non-regulated businesses.

The sell-offs will raise around £70m, with an extra £30m benefit from property disposals. The cut-backs, which will cost £21m mainly in redundancy pay, will also generate annual cost of £52m.

Mike Kinski, brought in to run Southern after the takeover, gave a damning view of the company's previous board, all of whom have since left. He said too much had been spent on duplicating administrative functions while customer services investment had been neglected.

The businesses to be sold off include an estate agency chain, a computing company and a vehicle-leasing operation. Though they accounted for more than half Southern's staff, they generated just 14 per cent of the group's sales and 7 per cent of its profits.

Mr Kinski insisted the "vast majority" of the staff involved would keep their jobs when the businesses were sold, and disclosed he had already received several approaches from outside firms.

Dilys Plant, the head of external relations for Ofwat, said Ian Byatt, the water regulator, had been warned in

advance about the job cuts. He said: "The key issue will be whether or not there is any deterioration in service. We have said in the past we wouldn't want to see companies drive down costs and adversely affect customer service."

ScottishPower yesterday revealed a 31 per cent rise in half-yearly pre-tax profits to £167m. It raised its dividend payout by 19 per cent to 18.5p.

The announcement was preceded by a violent storm which cut off 16,000 ScottishPower electricity customers. By late last night 9,000 homes were still waiting to be reconnected.

## French government suspends Thomson sale

Michael Harrison

The French privatisation programme was thrown into utter chaos yesterday after the Chirac government suspended the controversial sale of the defence and electronics giant Thomson to a consortium including British Aerospace.

The move was prompted by a wave of public protests that had greeted plans to sell Thomson's consumer electronics business, Thomson Multimedia (TMM), to a Korean conglomerate.

Lagardere, which was chosen as the preferred bidder for Thomson in October, had

planned to dispose of TMM to Daewoo Electronics. That would have left it to share Thomson's defence business with BAE, which was prepared to provide financial support for the Lagardere bid and has already merged its missiles business with Matra, a Lagardere subsidiary.

But the move to offload TMM to Daewoo prompted mass anger. Several thousand TMM workers marched last month protesting against the sale to a booming Asian competitor, fearful for their jobs and working conditions.

In a shock announcement

yesterday, the French Finance Ministry said its Privatisation Commission "declared itself incapable of giving a favourable opinion to the Lagardere offer, because of the terms of Daewoo Electronics' purchase of Thomson Multimedia".

The move left industrialists, bankers and political observers stupefied, particularly as the French prime minister, Alain Juppe, had defended its choice of buyer for several weeks.

The suspension of the sale comes just days after Mr Juppe's right-wing government gave in to the demands of striking lorry drivers and less than

a month after the privatisation of the French bank, CIC was also put off.

The official explanation given at the time was that the bids had not been high enough. But the real reason is thought to have been that there was no acceptable offer by a French bidder, meaning that CIC might have had to be split up and auctioned off to foreign buyers.

The French industry minister, Franck Borotra, said the privatisation of Thomson remained essential for the company. But the decision to suspend the process means that Alcatel, which had been tipped

as the most likely winner, may now re-enter the fray.

Alcatel, which had pledged to keep Thomson intact, said it "took note" of the decision. Lagardere said it remained interested in taking over the company. If its bid succeeds, Thomson's missiles and defence electronics business, which has sales of £300m-£400m, will be incorporated into the £1bn joint venture formed by Matra and BAE.

Meanwhile there was better news for BAE in the shape of confirmation that it is part of a consortium which has bought the German defence systems

company STN Atlas Elektronik. BAE is paying £104m for a 49 per cent stake in the business, which will give it access to the German naval market.

The deal will come as a small consolation after BAE lost out to GEC in the battle to take over VSEL, which would have given it a naval systems integration capacity.

"This allows us to extend and enhance our expertise and builds on our systems integration expertise and customer base," said a spokesman. The other members of the consortium are the German groups Rheinmetall and Badenwerk.

## Williams sells off £360m DIY brands

Williams Holdings, the industrial conglomerate chaired by Sir Nigel Rudd, yesterday cleared the decks for a £360m spending spree after announcing the £360m sale of some of Britain's best-known DIY and building brands. A management group led by Mike Davies, currently head of Williams' building and security products division, is investing "well over £1m" in a buy-out of a package of 15 companies including household names like Rawlplug, the company which invented the eponymous wall plug, to Amtega, builder of Britain's first Victorian conservatory, and including Swiss curtain tracks and Smallbone of Devizes, maker of the up-market kitchens.

The intention is that the new company, to be called Newmond, will float in due course, following in the footsteps of earlier Williams disposals including Pendragon, the motor dealer, Cortworth, an engineering group, and the electronics businesses sold earlier this year, which intends to float in due course. As with earlier disposals, Williams is retaining an interest in Newmond through a 26 per cent stake.

The deal, which will throw up a £90m profit for Williams and dilute profits by £8m in a full year, comes after two years of

underperformance by the group's shares as conglomerates have fallen out of favour with the market. Sir Nigel denied the group was attempting to lose its conglomerate tag, but the shares bounced 5p to 244.5p yesterday as analysts welcomed the deal as giving more focus to the group.

Williams said the businesses being sold, although mostly market leaders in the UK, did not fit well in the context of its plan to develop global operations in the three areas of fire protection, security and home improvement products. It will wipe out borrowings and leave the acquisitive group with net cash of £40m.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low	Yield(%)	Index	Close	Day's change
FTSE 100	4061.50	+23.00	+0.6	4073.10	3632.30	3.91	Dow Jones	8510	+10.00
FTSE 250	4427.60	+12.80	+0.3	4468.60	4015.30	3.55	Nikkei	22900	+100
FTSE 350	2015.40	+10.20	+0.5	2022.10	1816.60	3.84			
FTSE SmallCap	2161.29	+1.23	+0.1	2244.36	1954.06	3.19			
FTSE All-Share	1995.29	+9.40	+0.5	1994.54	1791.95	3.79			
New York	8442.60	-79.01	-0.9	8547.79	8032.94	2.01			
Tokyo	20630.56	-44.13	-0.2	20956.60	19734.70	0.781			
Hong Kong	13456.26	-61.30	-0.5	13500.95	12604.87	3.051			
Frankfurt	2886.98	+22.38	+1.0	2886.98	2253.36	1.611			

Source: FT Information, Data as of 3/12/96

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling	UK medium gilt	US long bond	Money Market Rates	Bond Yields	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Long Bond
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

CURRENCIES									
£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	£/A\$	£/NZ\$	£/HK\$	£/SG\$	£/R\$	£/C\$	£/IN\$
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520
1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520	1.6520

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## There's some life left in the old NatWest yet

But for lethargy and the fact that the free market never works as perfectly as it should, it would be possible to write with some authority right now that the main high street banks have essentially had it, that in a fast-changing world these dinosaurs of retail and corporate financial services are going to die out (a bit like discount houses of which more later), becoming little more than fossils embedded in the rocks of history.

As it is, most of them look to be evolving sufficiently swiftly (though Lord knows, progress is slow enough) to ensure passage into the next stage of the Darwinian tree. Yesterday's radical set of announcements from NatWest has clearly demonstrated that there's life and determination left in those old bones yet.

What NatWest is doing mirrors what is happening elsewhere in high street banking. With varying degrees of speed, all the major banks are shedding staff and closing branches like toffs. For most of us, the branch network is now a largely redundant infrastructure.

Telephone banking, supermarket banking, offer potentially dramatic advances both in terms of customer service and its cost. With the clearers still largely stuck with the cost structure of a bygone age (nationwide branch networks together with supporting infrastructure), banking, in theory, is ripe for the taking by new entrants.

As always, however, it is not that easy in

practice. Indeed, given the present buoyancy of banking profits and the scope for offering much cheaper lines of service, you would expect far more competition from new entrants than is actually proving to be the case. That there is not is partly down to the fact that banking is still essentially a highly regulated oligopoly, and partly because even in today's much more savvy and consumerist world, it remains difficult to dislodge an established banking customer. Changing bank just seems to take more effort than its worth.

Furthermore, the established banks are proving relatively effective in offering the new forms of banking, even if this is not yet reflected in what they charge for it. In other words, the established players are proving quite adept at preserving their supremacy in the new age. That they continue to hold sway depends very much on the speed with which they can reduce cost. This is not without its dangers, as the Banking Ombudsman's report yesterday demonstrated. One of the most common complaints in a growing body of them was about branch closures and not enough people.

The trick, then, is to adapt fast enough to deter new competition, but slowly enough to manage adequately the retreat in traditional banking methods and infrastructure. On both these fronts, NatWest and others seem for the moment to be doing as well as can reasonably be expected. Though plainly the fat profit margins presently earned by the

clearers will be under pressure, they stand a good chance of maintaining their present market position.

Those strange little organisations called discount houses have been given so much warning of their demise by the Bank of England that even the most sleepy has managed to diversify away from their core money market businesses. Indeed, the odd thing is how long the motherly Old Lady has cosseted and cooed over this tiny band of miniature banks, just about the last places in the City to offer port after lunch. The justification was that they acted as a useful buffer in the money markets against the power of the clearing banks.

If the Bank of England had been obliged to have regular eyeball to eyeball confrontations with a bullying NatWest every time it wanted to manipulate short term interest rates, it might not have come out of the experience very well. Taking a tough line with Union, Gerard & National or Cater Allen is like picking on the school weakling. The Bank's ingrained habit until now has been to maintain a tightly controlled register of the people it is prepared to deal with, whether it be in bonds or bills.

Now caution is being thrown to the winds, and anyone can join the party, provided they have the technical expertise, trade repos regularly and are approved by regulators. They must also act as the Bank's eyes and ears,

agreeing explicitly to feed the Old Lady's hunger for useful snippets of information about the markets.

From next year, as many as 30 or 40 banks, building societies and securities houses are likely to be trading with the Bank in the gilts repo market every day, sidelining the discount market in the interest rate setting process (though the discount houses will continue in business, shorn of their monopoly access to the Bank's dealers).

By making gilts repos - a form of tradeable debt secured on government bonds - the primary instrument of monetary policy (setting interest rates to you and me), the Bank has moved a long way towards the money market methods expected to be adopted for controlling Euro interest rates.

Euroscrapies will see this as a ghastly plot. But in fact it is a sensible move away from an eccentric money market system nobody else uses towards a new trading expertise that will be useful even if we do not join the single currency.

Open up Southern Water's last annual report, published this year just as directors were recommending Scottish Power's £1.7bn takeover bid, and the phrase "creating value for shareholders" leaps off the page. Six months later the claim has a distinctly hollow ring, given that Scottish Power has managed to find further savings of £50m a year by reducing the workforce by almost half.

The received wisdom was that several years after privatisation most of the "fat" had been cut out of the utilities, to the benefit of investors and customers, leaving lean, efficient and clearly focussed operations. Yet Southern Water's apparent obsession with diversification into non-core activities now looks about as strategically focussed as sticking a pin in a page of the telephone directory.

Scottish Power has found savings all over the place. Southern had two separate head offices, one for the PLC and one for the regulated water business, with huge duplication of work. Some 25 staff were employed just to manage cash transactions between the two corporate structures. The same excess seems to exist in other utilities too. In the case of Manweb, the regional electricity company bought by Scottish Power last year, the existing management had already slashed the workforce from 4,415 to 3,351 during their unsuccessful bid defence. Yet a year later Scottish Power had found another 500 jobs to cut.

Price controls have obviously achieved wonders in improving efficiency, but if Southern Water is anything to go by, they have not gone anywhere near far enough. Both regulators and Government should bear this in mind should they feel tempted to block the two outstanding bids for regional electricity companies on the grounds that they would lead to a loss of quoted comparisons.

## Bank of England revamps money market dealing

Peter Rodgers  
Financial Editor

The Bank of England yesterday announced the biggest reform for more than a century in the way that interest rates are set, marking the end of the privileged position of the City's seven discount houses.

The bank's dealings in the short-term money markets are to be opened early next year to a wide range of banks, building societies and securities firms of UK or continental ownership.

At the same time, gilt repos - debt backed by government bonds - are to become a key part of the bank's daily trading with the market.

The discount houses are specialist banks that have traditionally had a monopoly on daily dealings in bills of exchange with the Bank of England. Trading in the bills is used to control interest rates and signal changes in the cost of borrowing.

The reforms, scheduled for early next year, will restructure London's sterling money markets in line with proposals expected to be adopted for the market in euros when the single currency is in operation.

However, Ian Plenderleith, an executive director of the bank, denied the restructuring in London was prompted by the single currency or the discussions under way at the European Monetary Institute on how to set interest rates after monetary union. "That's not our main motive," he said.

Mr Plenderleith said there were advantages in bringing the UK structure into line with the Continent, whether or not Britain joined the single currency. After the reforms, the London money markets would be "state of the art" and the bond markets would be "absolutely at the forefront" in world terms, Mr Plenderleith said.

He said the driving force for change was rapid evolution in the City, especially the mushrooming growth of the £15bn-a-day gilts repo market, where £60bn of repos are currently in force.

The bank will continue to use the traditional bill market operated by the discount houses. But from next year, changes in interest rates will be signalled by a move in repo rates rather than the traditional method of altering the rates at which the

bank deals in the discount market.

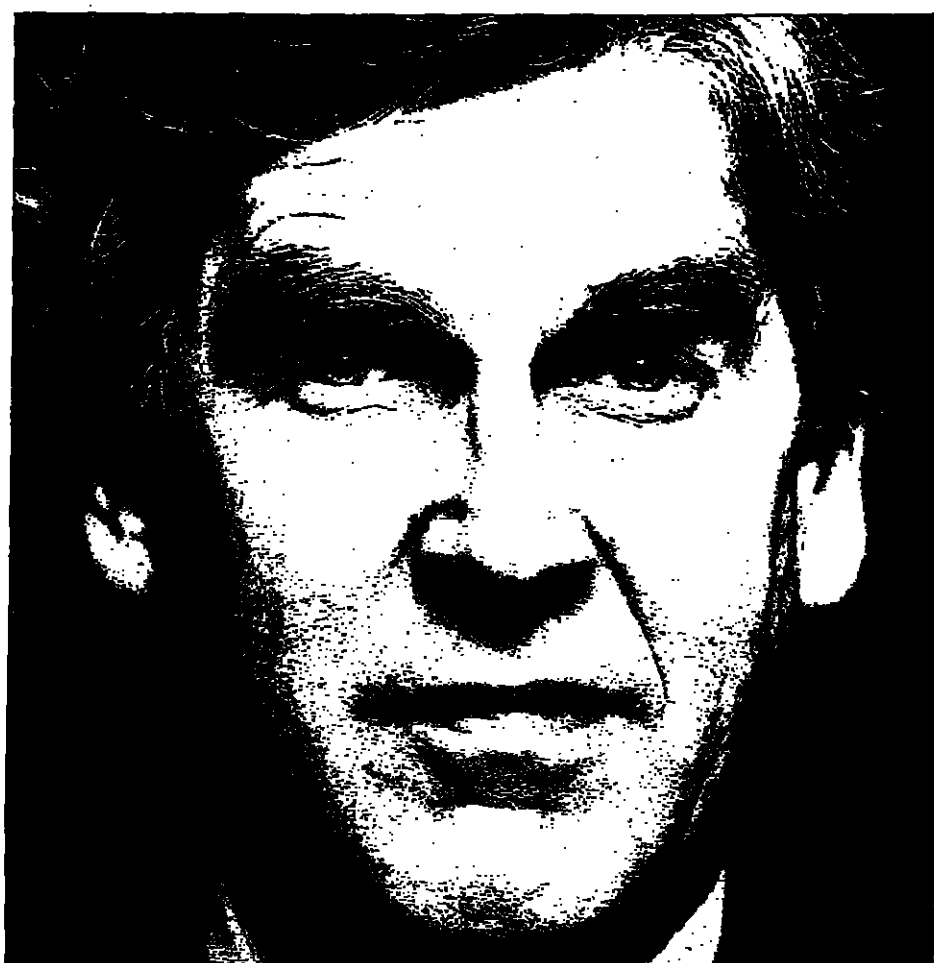
The bank is also abandoning its insistence that gilt-edged market makers are established as separate firms, known as GEMMs, and instead will allow them to be merged into their parent groups' balance sheets. Gilt repo dealers will sign a private contract with the bank and there will be no published list.

There are to be changes in the money market dealing timetable during the day and new arrangements for clearing banks that need overnight loans. The discount houses' obligation to underwrite the weekly Treasury bill tender will be dropped.

The discount houses, which are specialist banks, have been given a decade of quiet warning by the bank that their market will be opened up.

They have already diversified into other financial specialisms and some have moved into the gilts repo market. Cater Allen, one of the leading houses, said: "We believe we will benefit [from the changes]."

Until the reform, however, the houses have retained their special access to the bank's dealing rooms.



Ian Plenderleith: Denied the restructuring was prompted by the single currency

The value of this privilege has been whittled away in recent years because the clearing banks have become the dominant bill market traders, even though they have had to channel their dealings with the bank through the houses.

In 1994, the bank further eroded the houses' role by experimentally beginning fort-

nightly, rather than daily, dealings in gilt repos outside the discount market.

The European Monetary Institute is expected to publish proposals in January for the detailed operations of the money market in euros.

According to the bank's discussion document, the plans being drawn up by the Euro-

pean Monetary Institute are "relevant to any further development of the bank's operations whether or not the UK participates in monetary union: the changes proposed in this paper are consistent with the direction and spirit of the proposals currently under discussion at the European Monetary Institute".

## Continental and Delta in merger talks

David Osborne  
New York

Speculation about a fresh wave of consolidation in the American airline industry was reignited yesterday on reports that Delta Air Lines and Continental Airlines were in talks about a possible merger.

The two carriers were said to be continuing tentative merger talks that were instigated by Continental last summer. It was widely believed, however, that the contacts were still in the exploratory phase and that no final agreement on a full-out merger was imminent.

An eventual marriage of the companies would transform the aviation landscape in the US and send ripples through the industry worldwide. If combined, Delta, the third-largest US carrier, and Continental, number five, would emerge as the largest airline in the world.

There was no comment on the speculation from either carrier yesterday. However, Carla Villalon, spokeswoman for Continental, gave credence to the belief that exploratory talks were taking place by saying the company would have no announcement concerning a possible merger with Delta until at least the "distant future".

There was a similar flurry of activity in the industry a year ago

when it was revealed that US-Air had effectively put itself up for sale and entered talks with United Airlines and American Airlines. Both sets of talks quickly fizzled, however, and US-Air is still flying alone.

The prospect of a large merger finally happening continues to mesmerise the industry. Any such transaction would torpedo the status quo and prompt every other large carrier to find partners to take down the marriage aisle. In that instance, US-Air, in which British Airways has a 25 per cent stake, would be quickly snapped up.

Though not overwhelming, there is some logic to a Delta-Continental tie-up. They have complementary hub networks in the US and Continental would give Delta strength in the South, notably in Texas, and in New York. Continental would also bolster Delta's presence in South America.

After several miserable years that included two journeys into bankruptcy, Continental has engineered a widely-admired turnaround back into profit under the leadership of its chief executive, Gordon Bethune. Delta has also bounced back into profit. The two carriers have fleets that would be ill-matched, however, and analysts warn complications would arise from combining their workforces.

## FirstBus to run Eastern rail line

Patrick Toohar

FirstBus yesterday won its first outright railway franchise when Britain's biggest local bus company was awarded the right to run the Great Eastern line out of London's Liverpool Street station.

However, FirstBus could run into regulatory problems as it already operates local bus services within the Great Eastern franchise area.

Last night the Office of Fair Trading confirmed it would examine the competition implications of the award. "We will be looking at this in the normal way," said an OFT spokesman.

FirstBus, which also has a 24.5 per cent interest in the Great Western franchise, is promising passengers on the busy commuter line a £9m improvement package. The franchise, lasting seven years and three months, will involve the company refurbishing trains, increasing services, cleaning up stations and raising punctuality targets.

There are also plans to introduce a pilot through-ticketing scheme on buses and trains in Colchester and Chelmsford. However, Trevor Smallwood, FirstBus chairman, refused to rule out job cuts among Great Eastern's 1,400 staff.

FirstBus will receive a subsidy of £29m from taxpayers in the first year of the franchise, compared with the £40.6m given to British Rail in 1996-1997. But the annual grant will dwindle to nothing in 2001-2, and by 2003-4 FirstBus will actually be paying the Government's rail franchise office £9.5m.

## US inflation rate could be overstated by 1.1%

Rupert Cornwell  
Washington

US government statistics may be heavily overestimating the country's rate of inflation, and a correction could slash tens of billions of dollars off the country's annual budget deficit and simultaneously boost the chances of a political deal for a balanced federal budget.

According to a report to Congress by an authoritative independent commission yesterday, the Consumer Price Index overstates the real inflation rate by 1.1 percentage points. In other words, US inflation is running at not just under 3 per cent a year, but little more than 1.5 per cent. For the public finances, the consequences of such an adjustment would be momentous.

Social security payments, geared to the CPI, would rise less rapidly, as would inflation-linked income tax deductions

and exemptions, meaning that the Treasury's tax take would be higher. Higher receipts and smaller outlays would reduce the federal borrowing requirement.

In all, calculates the commission headed by Michael Boskin, a former chief economic adviser to President Bush, a change in the index could cut the federal deficit by \$60bn (£37bn) by 2002, the target year of both democratic and Republican plans for a balanced budget. On present trends, that year's deficit is put at between \$150bn and \$200bn.

Doubts about the validity of the CPI have long been voiced here by no less than Alan Greenspan, Federal Reserve Board chairman, among others. There is a growing view that the structure of the CPI does not take sufficient account of ever fiercer competition in the economy, and the tendency of con-

sumers to buy cheaper alternatives if a particular item covered in the index becomes more expensive. But the latest finding could not be better timed for the balanced budget lobby.

Not only was the US deficit of \$106bn in fiscal 1996 the lowest in 20 years (and at 1.6 per cent of GDP the most respectable of any major industrial country), but the political landscape is favourable for a bipartisan budget agreement within the next 12 to 18 months.

Even before yesterday's report, the gap between Republican and Democratic budget blueprints had shrunk to a total of \$148bn over the five years until 2002. An enlarged Republican majority in the Senate makes it more likely that a constitutional amendment to balance the budget will clear Congress in 1997, giving both sides political cover to strike an agreement.

## Utilities call for higher bills

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

Several privatised utility companies are pressing for "immediate" increases in customers' bills to compensate for surprise tax changes announced in last month's Budget.

Ian Russell, finance director of Scottish Power, said yesterday he would be writing to the electricity and water regulators to press for higher bills when the tax changes take effect from next April. The increases for customers would be relatively small, though they would be "in pounds rather than pennies".

The move is likely to embarrass the Government as ministers and utility executives gather today for a DTI conference hailing the achievements of privatisation.

The tax changes slash the amount of new investment companies can write off against corporation tax bills from 25 to 6 per cent. The alteration only applies to spending on assets with lives of more than 25 years, and has many exclusions including investment in trains and ships.

The "experts" have predicted that utility companies, which invest heavily in pipes and cables, will bear the brunt of the mea-

sure. It will raise £45m for the Treasury next year, rising to £675m a year in 1999/2000.

Mr Russell estimated the tax change would ultimately knock £25m off Scottish Power's annual profits. He said: "We are looking and I'm sure every other utility will be looking very hard at recovering the extra tax charge."

British Gas also confirmed it would be pressing for softer price cuts for its pipeline business. TransCo, which is the subject of a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry, to compensate. The tax change will cost the company an extra £40m a year by 1999/2000.

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# High technology fails to weaken the lure of London's Square Mile

A decade ago, at the time of the City of London's Big Bang, derivatives were an innovation which needed a PhD to understand. To many people, they are no less alarming and no easier to comprehend now, but they are part of the landscape. And they do make it clear that the financial services industry is on the frontier of the information technology revolution in economics.

For Big Bang in London and similar changes in other financial centres were the first of a series of changes as much by the huge investment in information technology and telecommunications as by regulatory change.

This investment, the need to stay on the technological wild west, remains the hallmark of the financial markets – the first and biggest cyber-industry. William Mitchell of the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology calls derivatives "pure creations of cyberspace".

The economic engine of the financial services industry is the production, transformation and consumption of digital information. It is in the front line of the shift towards what I call the weightless world.

This name reflects the fact that the economy physically weighs about the same now as it did a century ago, partly because most goods are smaller and lighter, partly because the things that increasingly have the greatest economic value are software and services.

This shift raises some interesting questions. Digital industry can take place anywhere, so why do financial services continue to be focused on the City? And would a UK decision not to join the European single currency threaten the City?

It is a paradox that, as its activity has dematerialised, the City as a place has become

ever more important. Obviously, some things that were done in London have moved, thanks to high technology. This includes back offices, registrars – any functions where the information can be put on a production line. But the high value added functions remain and are becoming increasingly concentrated in the Square Mile as more foreign banks move in.

There are certainly cost pressures to move out, or Canary Wharf would not exist and thrive. Kents and taxes are high in the City, the burden of commuting is heavy, deliveries and logistics are difficult, and there is even the threat of terrorism. With the cost of telecoms falling and quality rising steadily, acting as a powerful decentralising force, there must be some pretty strong glue.

So what explains the paradox? A lot of the standard explanations for London's appeal seem pretty weak. There is a pool of skilled labour, the English language, the time zone – but this is just as true of Luton.

Another standard explanation is that processing and exchange of information is essentially social. That you're not in the know if you're not in the bar. That rumours, gossip, sensitive conversations and spin doctoring don't work on the phone.

There may be something in this. But frankly, anyone who says you can't gossip down the line hasn't listened to a teenager recently.

It is the weightless economics that explain London's magic. One key is the existing infrastructure, representing enormous fixed investment – in expensive equipment, in the initial concentration of information, as well as the ease of connecting with other people. History matters in economics, like path-dependence

**Diiane Coyle**  
Explanations for London's appeal seem weak. There is a pool of skilled labour, English language, the time zone – but this is just as true of Luton

in science – just think of the enormous cost of laying cable and installing screens in other locations.

A related element is the "oasis" effect of access to high bandwidth cable connections, the fibres whose capacity to transmit digital bits is effectively infinite. The cost of using these channels increases enough with distance that users cluster together.

But just as important is the fact that telecoms allow concentration as well as decentralisation, to exploit economies of scale. It means that trading operations for international banks are increasingly centred on London. Deutsche Bank's decision to base its trading in the City is emblematic.

In economic geography,

the key to the location of economic activity is concentration. The obvious manifestation of this is that most people live in urban areas.

US economist Robert Hall puts this in extreme form when he says a city and a boom are essentially the same thing, one in space and one in time. In addition, most urban areas are very specialised because of the economies of scale. Hollywood does movies, Seattle does aircraft, Paris does couture.

London does financial services. It embodies the circularity of economic geography that companies want to be where the market is biggest and the market is biggest where the companies are.

This happens when there are big enough economies of scale and low enough transport costs. The economies of scale are clear in something like trading in the financial markets although they probably do not exist to as great a degree in sales. Falling transport costs, which comprise telecoms costs as far as the City is concerned, have therefore probably helped reinforce the concentration of some types of financial services in London.

Last but not least among the economic explanations is the fact that the financial services industry is growing rapidly, and a lot of the growth is going to take place where it is already located.

The advantage of infrastructure and economies of scale and growth will not be overturned until there is technical obsolescence on at least the scale of Big Bang, 10 years ago, and perhaps not even then. It is similarly implausible to suggest that UK membership or non-membership of the single European currency would make all that much difference.

Could these economic buttresses of the City's pre-eminence ever crumble? New technologies will almost cer-

tainly change the economic calculations significantly.

Techno-enthusiasts such as Nicholas Negroponte describe the possibilities eloquently, from clothes that form part of your computer such as batteries in the belt buckle and antennae in the frames of your glasses, to holograms of software agents sitting in front of your computer screen, waiting for verbal instructions.

This still seems the stuff of science fiction but one thing that is already clear is that modern technology and communications mean the link binding work to workplace is crumbling.

Not too long ago a fine building in the Square Mile would correspond one-to-one with a fine old institution. It rendered the institution visible and concrete. This is no longer true. It is people, not places, who define the institution these days, and a shifting group of people at that. It is at least as true of financial services as of advertising that it is a people business.

Equally, work is making greater claims over people. Work follows most of us everywhere, thanks to the phone, fax, pager, mobile and laptop. We could be seeing the start of a reversal of the trend towards the divorce of home and workplace identified by the historian Lewis Mumford in his 1934 classic, *Technics and Civilisation*. In financial services, as in many other professional or white-collar jobs, work attaches itself to the person, not the place.

These shifts will continue to work against London's primacy as a place, a three-dimensional city in geographical space. But if it can survive the plague and the Great Fire, industrialisation and the automobile, it can probably also beat off the challenge of cyberspace.

"City of Biss", William Mitchell, MIT Press 1996.

## The truth is out there: on video and worth £1m

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Sighted in Swindon: Comprehensive insurance can pay

A British insurance broker says it is about to pay £1m to a client who insured himself against being abducted by aliens.

Simon Burgess of brokers GRIP says Joseph Carpenter, who paid £100 in October to insure himself against being whisked away, impregnated or eaten by aliens, has presented convincing proof of his abduction.

Mr Burgess, who has attracted much publicity by offering off the wall insurance policies, such as insurance against virgin births, says: "We will be presenting Mr Carpenter with just under £1m on 21 December at a London hotel. Gillian Anderson of the *X-Files* will present the cheque."

Mr Carpenter has presented video and other evidence. He has validated his claim and our intention is to provide him with his money. We have 26 insurers backing us."

Mr Carpenter, an electrician from Edmondton, London, can't wait to get his hands on the money. He describes the abduction: "It happened in Swindon. We were trespassing near a military base. We've got camcorder footage, photos, a claw. They've done DNA tests on the claw – it's all been analysed at a Cambridge college."

Isn't he afraid people will accuse him of being either loopy or of making it up?

"The camera would have to be loopy as well. As long as I get my money I don't care what they call me. To be honest, I'm looking forward to meeting Gillian Anderson more than getting the cheque – wey hey!"

The Association of British Insurers says that more than 100,000 Americans have taken out similar insurance against alien kidnappings. "Most British insurers are sniffy about these kinds of policies," says an ABI spokesman. It sounds like Mr Burgess could really clean up stateside.

City spin doctors Citigate

have been bought out by communications group Incepta at around £28m. Founding directors of Citigate, like chief executive David Wright, who holds 10 per cent of the equity, will obviously trouser a big wedge.

What about Patrick Donovan, legendary *bon vivant* and business scout on the *Guardian*, who is about to join a Citigate subsidiary as a director? Has our hero missed the boat?

Quite the reverse, says Mr Wright. "Patrick's timing is impeccable. There were no share options under the previous set-up, but we will be looking to offer incentives to our directors." Lucky so and so.

Among the 15-odd companies being bought out by Williams Holdings is Rawplig. The company was founded by John Rawlings in the 1920s, when he invented rawl plugs – which were originally made out of pig's blood and sial. They still use sial – but an alternative to pig's blood has been found.

Williams are also selling off Amdega, a company which builds up-market conservatories. Amdega claims it made the first ever conservatory in the UK in 1874, at Preston Hall near Darlington, for the Hall's owner Sir Robert Roper, a local MP.

cornered the supply of old-fashioned top hats, which used to be such a feature of the Square Mile.

He says he bought the half-dozen hats from Mullens, the former government broker, but since then they have been sitting in a cupboard. He has so far failed to find a buyer.

The last bit brokers to visit the Bank in their top hats stepped down so only four years ago. Now everything's done on the phone, he says.

Mr Plenderleith's own top hat is still in his office – but languishing unused. It's a ceremonial hangover from his titular, ceremonial role of Government Broker.

Williams are also selling off Amdega, a company which builds up-market conservatories. Amdega claims it made the first ever conservatory in the UK in 1874, at Preston Hall near Darlington, for the Hall's owner Sir Robert Roper, a local MP.

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates			
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	16200	9.7	36.33
Canada	22281	54.49	164.56
Germany	25879	69.61	203.93
France	87460	217.98	640.08
Italy	25412	31.40	102.23
Norway	12738	52.30	281.27
ECU	13371	21.18	68.61
Japan	53331	51.0	42.36
Denmark	90308	222.77	656.56
Netherlands	25037	82.74	240.22
Ireland	10036	31.1	10.10
Norway	10778	52.30	302.27
Spain	21776	12.21	31.48
Sweden	1247	15.8	44.33
Switzerland	22000	85.76	239.23
Australia	20708	10.16	12.53
Hong Kong	17328	93.52	240.16
Malaysia	4178	0.0	0.0
New Zealand	23335	64.71	155.18
Saudi Arabia	6358	0.0	0.0
Singapore	2386	0.0	0.0

Other Spot Rates			
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
Argentina	18222	0.9396	0.9396
Australia	18206	1.0226	1.0226
China	17064	1.0321	1.0321
France	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Germany	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Italy	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Japan	17064	1.0321	1.0321
UK	17064	1.0321	1.0321
US	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Canada	17064	1.0321	1.0321
South Africa	17064	1.0321	1.0321
India	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Indonesia	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Malaysia	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Philippines	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Singapore	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Thailand	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Taiwan	17064	1.0321	1.0321
South Korea	17064	1.0321	1.0321
China	17064	1.0321	1.0321
India	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Indonesia	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Malaysia	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Philippines	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Singapore	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Thailand	17064	1.0321	1.0321
Taiwan	17064	1.0321	1.0321
South Korea	17064	1.0321	1.0321

Interest Rates			
Country	Rate	Term	Rate
US	6.00%	Discount	2.50%
UK	6.00%	Discount	4.50%
Germany	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
France	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Italy	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Japan	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Canada	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Spain	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Sweden	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Denmark	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Netherlands	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Belgium	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Australia	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
South Africa	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
India	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Indonesia	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Malaysia	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Philippines	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Singapore	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Thailand	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
Taiwan	3.20%	Discount	4.50%
South Korea	3.20%	Discount	4.50%

Bond Yields			
Country	Rate	Term	Rate
US	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
UK	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Germany	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
France	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Italy	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Japan	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Canada	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Spain	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Sweden	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Denmark	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Netherlands	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Belgium	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Australia	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
South Africa	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
India	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Indonesia	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Malaysia	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Philippines	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Singapore	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Thailand	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
Taiwan	7.1%	10yr	7.1%
South Korea	7.1%	10yr	7.1%

Liffe Financial Futures			
Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open
Long US	1000	1000	1000
Short US	1000	1000	1000
Long UK	1000	1000	1000
Short UK	1000	1000	1000
Long Japan	1000	1000	1000
Short Japan	1000	1000	1000
Long Germany	1000	1000	1000
Short Germany	1000	1000	1000
Long France	1000	1000	1000
Short France	1000	1000	1000
Long Italy	1000	1000	1000
Short Italy	1000	1000	1000
Long Spain	1000	1000	1000
Short Spain	1000	1000	1000
Long Sweden	1000	1000	1000
Short Sweden	1000	1000	1000
Long Denmark	1000	1000	1000
Short Denmark	1000	1000	1000
Long Netherlands	1000	1000	1000
Short Netherlands	1000	1000	1000
Long Belgium	1000	1000	1000
Short Belgium	1000	1000	1000
Long Australia	1000	1000	1000
Short Australia	1000	1000	1000
Long South Africa	1000	1000	1000
Short South Africa	1000	1000	1000
Long India	1000	1000	1000
Short India	1000	1000	1000
Long Indonesia	1000	1000	1000
Short Indonesia	1000	1000	1000
Long Malaysia	1000	1000	1000
Short Malaysia	1000	1000	1000
Long Philippines	1000	1000	1000
Short Philippines	1000	1000	1000
Long Singapore	1000	1000	1000
Short Singapore	1000	1000	1000
Long Thailand	1000	1000	1000
Short Thailand	1000	1000	1000
Long Taiwan	1000	1000	1000
Short Taiwan	1000	1000	1000
Long South Korea	1000	1000	1000
Short South Korea	1000	1000	1000

Liffe FTSE Index Option			
Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open
Long US	1000	1000	1000
Short US	1000	1000	1000
Long UK	1000	1000	1000
Short UK	1000	1000	1000
Long Japan	1000	1000	1000
Short Japan	1000	1000	1000
Long Germany	1000	1000	1000
Short Germany	1000	1000	1000
Long France	1000	1000	1000
Short France	1000	1000	1000
Long Italy	1000	1000	1000
Short Italy	1000	1000	1000
Long Spain	1000	1000	1000
Short Spain	1000	1000	1000
Long Sweden	1000	1000	1000
Short Sweden	1000	1000	1000
Long Denmark	1000	1000	1000
Short Denmark	1000	1000	1000
Long Netherlands	1000	1000	1000
Short Netherlands	1000	1000	1000
Long Belgium	1000	1000	1000
Short Belgium	1000	1000	1000
Long Australia	1000	1000	1000
Short Australia	1000	1000	1000
Long South Africa	1000	1000	1000
Short South Africa	1000	1000	1000
Long India	1000	1000	1000
Short India	1000	1000	1000
Long Indonesia	1000	1000	1000
Short Indonesia	1000	1000	1000
Long Malaysia	1000	1000	1000
Short Malaysia	1000	1000	1000
Long Philippines	1000	1000	1000
Short Philippines	1000	1000	1000
Long Singapore	1000	1000	1000
Short Singapore	1000	1000	1000
Long Thailand	1000	1000	1000
Short Thailand	1000	1000	1000
Long Taiwan	1000	1000	1000
Short Taiwan	1000	1000	1000
Long South Korea	1000	1000	1000
Short South Korea	1000	1000	1000

Industrial Metals			
Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open
Long US	1000	1000	1000
Short US	1000	1000	1000
Long UK	1000	1000	1000
Short UK	1000	1000	1000
Long Japan	1000	1000	1000
Short Japan	1000	1000	1000
Long Germany	1000	1000	1000
Short Germany	1000	1000	1000
Long France	1000	1000	1000
Short France	1000	1000	1000
Long Italy	1000	1000	1000
Short Italy	1000	1000	1000
Long Spain	1000	1000	1000
Short Spain	1000	1000	1000
Long Sweden	1000	1000	1000
Short Sweden	1000	1000	1000
Long Denmark	1000	1000	1000
Short Denmark	1000	1000	1000
Long Netherlands	1000	1000	1000
Short Netherlands	1000	1000	1000
Long Belgium	1000	1000	1000
Short Belgium	1000	1000	1000
Long Australia	1000	1000	1000
Short Australia	1000	1000	1000
Long South Africa	1000	1000	1000
Short South Africa	1000	1000	1000
Long India	1000	1000	1000
Short India	1000	1000	1000
Long Indonesia	1000	1000	1000
Short Indonesia	1000	1000	1000
Long Malaysia	1000	1000	1000
Short Malaysia	1000	1000	1000</







## sport

## Those who bask in the false light of football's 'new writing' are blind to the fact that a hard game is being played out there

Never mind that idea of a beautiful game, the best advice a young footballer can take on to the field is that no opponent should ever be trusted. I heard it first from a real hard case, a Welsh international everlastingly embarrassed by the disableness once inflicted upon him by a man of quite gentle persuasion.

In moments of deep reflection, which was usually after a pint or two, he would point to a scar just below his right knee and say, "Imagine getting that from a player who probably hadn't kicked anybody before and hasn't since. But the bastard saw his chance, caught me off guard. Take it as a lesson and you are less likely to end up on a stretcher."

Recent incidents make naive the notion that brotherly love is on the

upswing and football is becoming a happier world to live in, with or without banged-up knees, stud-scarred ankles, cracked cheekbones and similar marks of the man of culture.

In their eagerness to pile up knowledge about formations and tactics, many students of football today, especially those who bask in the false light of its 'new writing', appear blind to the fact that a hard game is being played out there.

Character, courage and similar goodies are shorthand for relentless aggressiveness, for being a tough competitor. The majority of players, I think, would draw the line at being aggressive to the point of not caring whether they hurt opponents, but in keeping with history some should be approached with the

utmost caution. Versions of "Find out how fast he can limp" are still with us.

Frugality prevails in football. There is no future in violent play but the injection of "naïveté" that one Premiership manager speaks of privately as essential to his team's progress gets closer to the truth than many people imagine.

When the greatest of all footballers, Pele, was first introduced to Brazil's national team, his coach, Vicente Feola, warned that he would not always be able to rely on referees for protection and had better start looking out for himself. Pele could never be described as a dirty player and did not chase trouble but opponents provoked him at their peril. Some years later in Rio, when



KEN JONES

established as the game's leading player, he broke the leg of a violent German defender, Szmaniak.

When considering the wickedness that football managers to conceal (even under the close scrutiny of television), it is natural to think of

defenders; defenders make the majority of tackles and therefore commit most of the fouls. Closer examination, however, reveals that an instinct for getting his retaliation in first did not make Pele unique among outstanding attackers.

Shortly before the 1978 World Cup final between Argentina and the Netherlands in Buenos Aires, I spent an afternoon with Rene van der Kerkhof, whose brother Willy was also in the Dutch team. Speaking in fluent English about various aspects of the tournament, he came across as a thoroughly pleasant and mature young man.

Van der Kerkhof could scarcely avoid being angered by the squalid gamesmanship Argentina employed two days later, taking the field five

minutes late and then objecting to a small, light plaster casting he had worn since damaging his wrist in the opening game. But it was no excuse for the dreadful foul he committed barely 10 minutes after the kick-off, driving his boot into the chest of an Argentinian defender.

Norman Hunter tackled his way into legend for Leeds United but greater peril lay in confrontations with a tiny Scottish international inside-forward, Bobby Collins, and John Giles, who appeared many times in that position for the Republic of Ireland. Making defenders think twice about going for them, theirs was a philosophy echoed by Denis Law, Francis Lee, Mike Summerbee, Allan Clarke, Peter Osgood, Kenny Dalglish and

numerous other leading attackers throughout the world. Scars remind some of Gerson's contemporaries in Brazil that his creative genius concealed alarming viciousness.

Watching football today, British football particularly, you are aware of the danger in innocence. This springs, I think, from inadequate tuition (defensive play generally is poor) and the absence of experienced players from reserve-team football. A renowned tackler in his day, Nobby Stiles maintained that he learned most about the game from playing with and against veteran professionals when turning out in the Central League for Manchester United. A safe bet is that he too was advised not to trust anybody.

## Case shut out at Brighton

Football  
ANDREW MARTIN

The malaise at Brighton & Hove Albion deepened yesterday when the Nationwide League's bottom club sacked their manager, Jimmy Case.

Unrest off the field has been matched by a dire record on it. Case guided Brighton to only three victories this season and saw his side knocked out of the FA Cup by non-League Sudbury. Brighton supporters protested again during Tuesday night's 3-2 home defeat to second-from-bottom Darlington, in the latest of a series of demonstrations against the club's board.

They are upset at the sale of the stadium and the club's plans to ground-share with Gillingham next season.

The club's chief executive, David Bellotti, said Brighton would now be advertising for a successor to Case, who had been in charge at Brighton for a year. Bellotti, speaking on Radio 5 Live, said a number of possible contenders to take Case's place had called the Goldstone Ground offering their services.

Denying it was a job no one would want, he added: "In the last few hours there have been a number of managers who are out of work, who have spoken to me, and who would like to consider coming to Brighton."

The Middlesbrough chairman, Steve Gibson, has made it clear that the unsettled Emerson would not be allowed to leave the club. Gibson said the £4m Brazilian midfielder has been fined six weeks' salary - around £50,000 - since he joined the club on a four-year contract in the summer.

Gibson said: "The club's po-

sition is clear. Emerson cannot be allowed to leave. If he doesn't comply he will lose everything and it will cost him his career."

Emerson has not yet informed Boro when he intends to return from Brazil but reports from South America indicate that he has been delayed because his wife, Andrea, is ill.

Jack Charlton, the former Republic of Ireland manager, has rejected an offer to become director of football at First Division Grimsby. The club's chairman, Bill Carr, said that Charlton did not want the "day-to-day pressure of running a club again".

Mike Newell is set to join Bolton from Birmingham City after the clubs agreed a £700,000 fee in time for the former Blackburn striker to be available for the weekend.

Liverpool are ready to sign the Gothenburg striker Andreas Andersson for £2m. The manager, Roy Evans, watched the Swedish international play in the Champions' League last night. The Anfield club have also thwarted an attempt by the England coach, Glenn Hoddle, to add their assistant manager, Doug Livermore, to the national team's coaching staff.

Southampton are to appeal over the sending-off of Ulrich Van Gobel at Blackburn. The Dutch defender was dismissed in a 2-1 defeat for a second bookable offence following a tussle with Chris Sutton.

Rangers are on the brink of recruiting the Chile striker Sebastian Rozental from Universidad Catolica for £3.75m. The 20-year-old is set to leave for Scotland after Chile's World Cup qualifier against Argentina on 15 December.

## Robson seeks smarter Boro

As baptisms to the arcane world of football management go, Bryan Robson's must rank as one of the least comfortable. The bright new Riverside Stadium has lost some of its sheen of late as the Middlesbrough team Robson spent some £20m to assemble has slumped to a 10-game winless run. With Boro within two points of the relegation places, Captain Marvel has every right to feel distinctly sour.

Yet Robson remains confident that his beleaguered squad can turn things around if they show the very qualities - brains allied to brawn - that made the former England and Manchester United dynamo such an outstanding player during his own career on the pitch.

"I can't fault the players' attitudes but they've got to start thinking about the game more," said Robson, who saw his side fall against a determined Leicester on Tuesday night.

"It's not just about putting in effort and commitment. Some times you've got to have knowledge of the game, like understanding when you should quicken the pace or slow it down," he said.

"We're going to have to try and remedy that in training and, hopefully, I'll have some of our more experienced players back soon, because experience always helps."

To cap Robson's problems on the field, the distraction of the unsettled Brazilian, Emerson, has been equally irksome off it. The peripatetic midfielder has again gone missing, and Robson will be hoping that Emerson

will, as reported, arrive back on Teesside today.

Middlesbrough's other Brazilian, Juninho, is also missing - through an injury to his ankle that will keep him from the playing field for up to three weeks. Juninho's influence this season has been as telling as Emerson's, particularly his link play with Fabrizio Ravanelli.

His loss will be deeply felt as well that of the captain, Nigel Pearson (neck), Steve Vickers (knee) and Alan Moore (hamstring).

Robson said he was unsure of when Emerson would finally arrive back in England after going absent for the third time in three weeks, but it is believed the Brazilian is now ready to return after nursing his wife, Andrea, back to health after worries that she was about to suffer a nervous breakdown.

Far from being on the verge of medical attention himself, Robson is putting a brave face on a difficult situation.

"We've got to show a little bit more fight and character and start to come back when we go behind. We haven't shown that for a long time now," he added.

If Boro required a lesson in how to nurture that single-minded spirit, they need look no further than Leicester, who moved up to 12th in the Premiership following their third away win of the campaign.

Martin O'Neill's team was pieced together at a fraction of the cost of Robson's, and the Middlesbrough manager must be acutely aware of the old adage that money does not always buy happiness.



News and all: A training session at Keys Park for Hednesford Town players before Saturday's FA Cup trip to Blackpool

Photograph: Peter Jay

## Pitmen primed for upward progress



Who said football folk were one-dimensional? To visit Keys Park, Hednesford Town's home of 18 months, is to be regaled with tales of foreign travel, endangered wildlife, inflammable gas and odorous Italians.

That's not the half of it. The GM Vauxhall Conference club are both managed and co-owned by a self-confessed bully who is also Steve Bull's accountant. They play in a stadium built on stilts. So when they visit Blackpool on Saturday - their first appearance in the second round of the FA Cup in a 116-year history - we should perhaps expect the unexpected.

Much of Hednesford's distinctive character stems from their larger-than-life manager, John Baldwin, who gives the lie to the old Monty Python put-down: "I'm an accountant and consequently too boring to be of interest."

With hindsight, the 400-mile round trips he made from university on Tyne-side to keep goal for his local team were the forerunners of an enduring passion.

That was in the early 1970s, when Hednesford propped up the Midland League and played to 200 people against the likes of Bridlington and Belper. Baldwin remained involved "on and off" until he took over in 1990, by which time they were struggling to stay in the Midland Division of the Beazer Homes (now Dr Martens) League.

Surely their current level is as high as they can hope for? "If I thought that," said Baldwin. "I'd pack it in now. Unfortunately, people in this town are not as positive or ambitious as me. So many of them told me: 'You'll never win the Beazer'

## Phil Shaw hears how Hednesford Town are preparing for a Cup challenge

Premier. I said 'We will.' Then they said: 'Even if you do, the ground won't be up to scratch for the Conference.' And I said: 'It will.' Then they said: 'Anyways, it won't be ready in time.' And I said: 'It will.'

"I'm a bit of a bully, and I like to get my way, but all this [we are sitting in a plush bar in the substantial stand] has come about through incredibly hard work and a lot of money. Plus

Hednesford have been charged with misconduct by the Football Association over alleged irregularities in a ground improvement grant application, following a complaint made by the Sports Grounds Initiative, the funding body administered by the Football Trust. The alleged offence is not thought to be serious.

the fact that I've got the most understanding wife in the world. My business takes 40 hours a week, Hednesford takes 50 hours. I don't think I have been home this week."

His unusual dual role means that the emotions are magnified. "When we play poorly here, I go away wondering about how many people we're going to get the next week and whether they'll be enough to pay the players. A normal manager doesn't worry about that."

"On the other hand, there can't be any other owner who

gets the same feeling I get when we win... or as depressed as me when we lose."

He believes the Blackpool tie is winnable, despite the fact that Hednesford's only success in knock-out competition came in reaching the Welsh Cup final in 1992. "Don't ask me what a Staffordshire club was doing in that, but we played before 12,000 people at Cardiff Arms Park, which was a catalyst for our success since."

"A Second Division side should beat us nine times out of 10. But I look at Woking winning at Millwall, or the way we nearly lost at Wednesfield in the first qualifying round even though they're four leagues below us. That's the Cup for you. We're certainly not going there for a day out at the seaside."

Hednesford's preferred resort is, in fact, Tottenham. For the past two years, as "a reward and spirit-lifting exercise", they have taken a mid-season break in the Spanish sunshine.

"When we arrived at the hotel pool the youngest couple there were in their late 70s. Suddenly there were these 20 macho blokes jumping around. We had to play a local team to sober the lads up before we flew back."

Talking of news, Hednesford must be unique in having to employ someone to catch them.

"We were three-quarters of the way through building a dam to help with sewerage on the site when a council official drove up and said: 'Stop! You can't do any more building. A ranger has spotted a greater crested newt.'"

"When we asked where, he

## Japan to stage World Cup final

Fifa, world football's governing body, is set to confirm the sport's worst-kept secret on Saturday when it formally announces that Japan will host the World Cup final in 2002.

It will also confirm that South Korea, jointly hosting the tournament with their Asian neighbours, will stage the opening match of the finals in six years' time.

Fifa attempted to keep secret recommendations of the World Cup 2002 Study Group amid farcical scenes in Zurich a month ago, when its vice-president, Lennart Johansson, told 100 reporters that no information about the finals would be announced until this weekend.

However, most of the details Fifa wanted to keep secret until endorsed by this weekend's executive committee meeting leaked out of Asia within hours.

A 33-point agenda will be set before the executive committee which is meeting, somewhat ironically, in Barcelona - where Spain won the 1992 Olympic football tournament.

The irony will not be lost on the Spaniards because Fifa is considering a proposal to abolish the tournament, which predates the World Cup by 30 years and was for three decades regarded as the unofficial world championship.

Among many other items, Fifa will be looking at ground safety, players' agents and a new initiative for the World Club Cup, which has been played between the champions of Europe and South America 35 times since 1960.

There is a possibility that the champion clubs of other confederations, including Asia, Africa and North America, could take part in an expanded tournament.

Two days before Fifa is due to meet in Barcelona, the executive committee of European football's governing body, Uefa, holds its own session in Tenerife.

Uefa officials, like Fifa's, are expected to give their proposals for changes in the transfer system in the wake of last year's Bosman ruling, the future of national teams and of domestic leagues.

The European body will also announce the venues for this season's European Cup and European Cup-Winners' Cup finals and that the Czech Republic will represent Europe at next year's inaugural Confederations Cup for national teams in Saudi Arabia.

Germany, who should represent Uefa as the reigning European champions after their victory over the Czech Republic at Wembley this summer, have made it clear they will not compete in the tournament during their league season's mid-winter break.

Uefa will also hear a proposal from the German Football Association that the number of qualification matches for the 2000 European Championships should be cut, leaving more dates available for lucrative international friendlies.

FOOTBALL RESULTS	
<b>Yesterday</b>	ASIAN CUP Group A (Abu Dhabi): United Arab Emirates 1 (Saad) South Korea 1 (Heung-Sun-Hong 9).
<b>Tuesday</b>	UEFA CUP Third round second legs: Newcastle 2 Macc 0 (P) 0 (S); Anderlecht 1 (S) 1 (S); Tottenham 2 (S) 1 (S); Ipswich 1 (S) 1 (S); Arsenal 1 (S) 1 (S); Manchester City 1 (S) 1 (S); Liverpool 1 (S) 1 (S); Chelsea 1 (S) 1 (S); Aston Villa 1 (S) 1 (S); Blackburn 1 (S) 1 (S); Birmingham 1 (S) 1 (S); Derby 1 (S) 1 (S); Nottingham Forest 1 (S) 1 (S); Sheffield Wednesday 1 (S) 1 (S); Leeds 1 (S) 1 (S); Middlesbrough 1 (S) 1 (S); Luton 1 (S) 1 (S); Peterborough 1 (S) 1 (S); Rotherham 1 (S) 1 (S); Shrewsbury 1 (S) 1 (S); Stockport 1 (S) 1 (S); Torquay 1 (S) 1 (S); Walsley 1 (S) 1 (S); Wrexham 1 (S) 1 (S); York 1 (S) 1 (S); Barnet 1 (S) 1 (S); Boreham 1 (S) 1 (S); Braintree 1 (S) 1 (S); Chesham 1 (S) 1 (S); Clacton 1 (S) 1 (S); Colchester 1 (S) 1 (S); Dagenham 1 (S) 1 (S); Eastleigh 1 (S) 1 (S); Enfield 1 (S) 1 (S); Grays 1 (S) 1 (S); Harlow 1 (S) 1 (S); Hemel Hempstead 1 (S) 1 (S); Hitchin 1 (S) 1 (S); Huddersfield 1 (S) 1 (S); Kidderminster 1 (S) 1 (S); Lincoln 1 (S) 1 (S); Maidstone 1 (S) 1 (S); 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**Pitmen on parade**  
Hednesford Town pursue  
FA Cup glory, page 26

**sport**

**Calling the shots**  
Nanisevic cruises through  
Agassi all at sea, page 27

# Croft gives England some relief at last

## Cricket

MARK BALDWIN  
reports from Harare  
England 197  
Mashonaland 279-9

David Houghton, Zimbabwe's veteran player-coach, kept up the pressure on struggling England with a brilliant innings of 110 for Mashonaland in Harare yesterday. However, the spinners Robert Croft and Phil Tufnell produced a dramatic final-hour fightback to finally put some smiles back on the tourists' faces.

The second day of England's opening four-day fixture in Zimbabwe ended with Mashonaland 82 runs ahead on 279 for 9, with Croft's last spell of the day bringing him 4 for 5 in six overs and Tufnell also finishing with four wickets.

An hour after tea, however, after a long slog under a fierce sun at the Harare Sports Club, things looked totally different with Mashonaland on 258 for 3. But Tufnell then held one up just enough to induce a return

catch from Houghton and England's tail was about to bring reward.

Six wickets fell in the space of nine overs, Croft ending the day with figures of 4 for 65 to go with his 80 not out in England's first innings 197.

During the first 50 minutes of play, Croft and Tufnell took their last-wicket stand to 52 after England had resumed on 175 for 9 after Tuesday's embarrassing first day.

Darren Gough then took an early wicket in an impressive new-ball burst before lunch, but during a long afternoon England needed the good fortune of two debatable umpiring decisions just to keep themselves afloat.

Tufnell, who has 4 for 77 overall so far, was the beneficiary of both incidents. First the opener Grant Flower was judged lbw for 28 as he swept with his front pad a long way down the pitch and then the Middlesex slow left-arm bowler won an appeal for a catch at slip by Nasser Hussain, after Alistair Campbell had seemed to miss a drive and the ball had

deflected off the pads of the wicketkeeper Alec Stewart.

Campbell, the Mashonaland and Zimbabwe captain, had made 55 from 76 balls and the left-hander walked off in obvious disgust at the decision. Later, however, he said he accepted the umpire's decision even though he was astonished at being given out.

However, England still seemed to be losing control of the match as Houghton was joined by Craig Wishart in a fourth-wicket partnership which eventually realised 116. The 39-year-old Houghton was at times quite majestic, and he reached both his 50 and his century with swept shots off Tufnell.

Houghton averages 48 from his 18 Tests and it was easy to see why yesterday as he struck 14 boundaries in his 141-ball innings. But then came England's recovery, with Croft, the Glamorgan all-rounder, adding to his already fast-growing reputation with a spell which may yet be a turning point on a pitch which is expected to take more and more spin as it wears.

"All you need in cricket is one wicket and things can change," David Lloyd, the England coach, said after the day's play. "We stuck at it and after a bit of an onslaught both spinners steadied themselves and they then got their reward."

England won toss

ENGLAND - First innings (Overseas: 175 for 9)  
P D H Croft not out 80  
P C R Tufnell c D J R Campbell b Houghton 65  
Extras (lbw 4, w 10, nb 7) 21  
Total (75.1 overs) 197

Fall: 1-3 2-4 3-7 4-27 5-63 6-88 7-94 8-125 9-145

Bowling: Houghton 25.1-4-53-5; B C Strong 19.2-2-52-1; Bennett 9-1-20-1; P A Strang 10-5-30-0; Mashonaland 6-0-34-1; Flower 1-0-2-0.

MASHONALAND - First innings

G W Flower lbw b Tufnell 28  
S V Carleton c and b Gough 19  
A D R Campbell c Houghton b Tufnell 59  
D I Houghton c and b Tufnell 110  
C B Wishart c Crawley b Croft 45  
P A Strang c Crawley b Croft 45  
N J R Campbell c Hussain b Croft 8  
G B Brent lbw b Croft 1  
B C Strong lbw b Tufnell 1  
D Mashonaland not out 2  
R J Harty not out 2  
Extras (lbw 4, w 10, nb 7) 21  
Total (for 9, 93 overs) 279

Fall: 1-22 2-30 3-142 4-258 5-266 6-267

Bowling: Mafema 12-2-42-0; Gough 16-3-43-1; Gaddick 10-2-46-0; Tufnell 24-6-77-4; Croft 21-3-65-4.

Umpires: K Harjono and D Kahan.

## Pakistan owe win to Saqlain's guile

The off-spinner Saqlain Mush-taq claimed 5 for 44 to help Pakistan to an 11-run victory over New Zealand in the opening one-day international in Gujranwala yesterday.

The 20-year-old returned his best figures in limited-overs cricket as the visitors, chasing Pakistan's 228 for 8, were dismissed for 217, two balls short of the 46 overs specified.

Bryan Young was top scorer for the tourists with a fluent 58 off 93 balls containing three fours, while Stephen Fleming and Chris Cairns contributed 36 each and Adam Parore 35.

Young shared a second-wicket stand of 78 with Parore after Craig Spearman had gone for six. They took the score to 104

when Parore was leg before to Mustaq Ahmed. Young then lost his middle stump to a fiery Waqar Younis delivery at 117.

Fleming and Cairns added 60 in just 9.4 overs, but Cairns edged a catch to Moiz Khan behind the stumps off Younis at 177 and eight runs later Fleming was stumped off Saqlain. The visitors then succumbed to Saqlain and though Chris Harris made a quick 20, it was not enough.

Pakistan, batting first after winning the toss, were helped to a respectable total by half-centuries from Salim Malik and their captain, Wasim Akram.

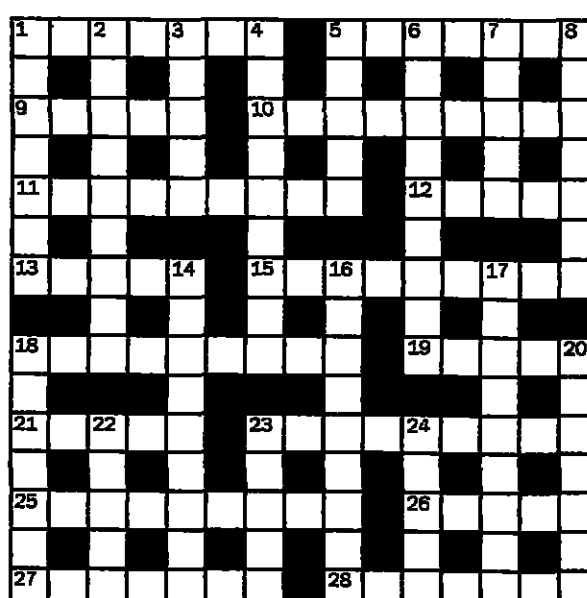
ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL (Gujranwala, Pakistan 228 for 8 (46 overs); Salim Malik 73, Wasim Akram 52; New Zealand 217 (45.4 overs); B Young 58; Saqlain Mush-taq 5-44; Pakistan won by 11 runs.

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3162, Thursday 5 December

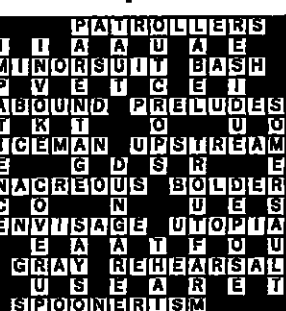
By Phil

Wednesday's Solution



### ACROSS

- Sweet that makes part of mouth go into decline (7)
- Cuts through, taking a brief time in some parts (7)
- Relative, one not liked initially by a woman (2,3)
- Arduous experience, running, after taking in two-thirds of the sporting challenge (9)
- Outlaw that's removed food, having absorbed scripture? (5,4)
- Very good joke recalled by attractive person (3,2)
- Was false about new looking old? (5)
- Writer - another that's involved with W H? (9)
- Writer - one where you'd find 11? (9)
- Academic accepting nothing as evidence (5)
- Soil exhibited in the Art House (5)
- Odds on the girl's in charge, having a student round (9)
- Way Euro is rubbished after Government department enquiry (3,3,3)
- Scottsman is going round Biblical mountain (5)
- Drink producer gets in last of harvest under cold weather conditions (7)
- Wild West hero has to pull on silence? (3,4)
- Rewarding in France (in old France, that is) (7)
- Just a tiny fraction in factory into working hard (9)
- Oursman seeing nothing we found in rivers (5)
- Greek character in performing troupe gets lead in Shakespeare (9)
- Stalwart character, Richard, supporting British (5)



### DOWN

- Outfit's bound to start trading (3,2,4)
- Stop company that's taken over half the capital (5)
- Connection between cells or pens, say, to be demolished (7)
- Unexpected candidate proving a nightmare? (4,5)
- Writer who gets employment after penning poem (9)
- What's unexpectedly not oral, yet found round about part of tooth? (4,5)
- Decorates (and how!) display at rink (3-4)
- Collapsible enclosure in front of garden (7)
- Argument over one tree (5)
- Throw over lady heartlessly and reluctantly (5)
- Part of stair where man goes up before Queen (5)



Mike Atherton, the England captain, feels the all too familiar strain during the struggle against Mashonaland yesterday

Photograph: Empics

## Threat to Olympic competition

### Football

Fifa, the world governing body, is considering a proposal to abolish the Olympic tournament, setting up in its place an under-23 world championship.

The issue goes before the executive committee, which is meeting in Barcelona on Saturday.

"If Fifa set up its own Under-23 World Championship and the IOC [International Olympic Committee] wanted to keep soccer in the Olympics, that could lead to problems," Keith Cooper, a Fifa spokesman, said yesterday. "The IOC can't do it without the approval of Fifa any more than they can stage an archery tournament if the International Archery Federation doesn't want to take part."

The disputes and the low quality line-ups meant the Olympic tournament rarely made the headlines until this year's Games in Atlanta, where Nigeria upset the leading nations, Brazil and Argentina, to become the first African winners.

Organisers thought they had reached a good compromise in Atlanta when the competition was based on players aged 23 and under, plus three over-age competitors. However, that attracted critics, too, culminating with the proposal from within the executive committee to set up a Fifa-backed world championship in that age group as replacement for the Olympic tournament. "It would make the Olympic men's tournament totally redundant," Cooper said.

Gilbert Felli, the IOC sports director, said he was aware that some Fifa officials have talked about taking football out of the Olympics. "After the Games, they were not happy that they were in Athens and not in Atlanta," Felli said. "There were some comments that

maybe football should go out of the Olympics because it doesn't get enough consideration."

The proposal to start a world under-23 competition may even gain the support of the English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Football Associations, because they are not recognised individually by the IOC and are ineligible for the Olympics.

Even if the championship is approved, the Olympic tournament should remain safe for the 2000 Games in Sydney at least. The likelihood is Fifa will not go as far as creating a conflicting tournament but will continue to reject the IOC's pleas to allow a completely open Olympic tournament. "Soccer is the only sport in the Olympics that has this age restriction and some people feel that in some way that is against the spirit of the Olympics," Cooper said.

Around 1.4m spectators watched the Olympic tournament at all its venues. More people watched the tournament than any other sport in the Games from the financial point

of view. But it would not be wise or in the interests of football for it to be a completely open event, because that effectively means some kind of World Cup every two years.

The United Arab Emirates, the hosts, came from behind yesterday to draw 1-1 with South Korea yesterday in the opening match of the Asian Cup tournament. Hwang Sun-hong, who scored South Korea's goal, could have settled matters in injury time when, with only the goalkeeper to beat, he shot just wide of the right post.

Hwang, running on to a delightful through ball from midfield, opened the scoring in the ninth minute. He fired a left-foot shot from just inside the penalty area into the bottom corner of the goal.

But as South Korea's domination began to become embarrassing, the UAE hit back through their striker Khamis Saad. The Korean central defenders failed to clear an easy cross, presenting Saad with his chance.

## Mansell to test for Jordan

### Motor racing

A possible Formula One comeback for Nigel Mansell's moved a step closer last night after he accepted an opportunity to test drive a Jordan-Peugeot Jd Barcelona next week.

Mansell will engage in a two-day test after meeting Eddie Jordan at Silverstone yesterday to discuss the possibility of driving for the team next season.

It was in Barcelona in June last year that Mansell seemingly walked away from the sport for good after retiring his McLaren Mercedes to complete a miserable two-race comeback. Since then, the 43-year-old former world champion has hinted that he might return - but only if the package was right.

"There's no commitment from either party beyond this test. Nigel is Britain's most successful Formula One driver of all time and it's an honour for everyone at Jordan to give him this run," Jordan said.

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